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ABSTRACT

This comparative study involving four St. Paul-Minneapolis, Minnesota, metropolitan public school districts investigates strategies, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents thought to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. Results address what election strategies are most commonly used to affect the outcome of school bond referenda and why, which election strategies have the greatest affect on referenda outcome and why, and which election strategies most differentiate between successful and unsuccessful school bond referenda and why. The study further shows how election strategies compare with other non-strategic factors in deciding school bond referenda, what affect critical incidents had on election outcomes, and what role superintendent leadership played in the selection of election strategies and the management of non-strategic factors and critical incidents. Appendices contain various research documents, including study questionnaires. (Contains 91 references.) (GR)

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FACTORS AFFECTING THE OUTCOME OF SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL BOND REFERENDA IN FOUR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

DON EDWARD LIFTO

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Don Edward Lifto

250 Words

Forty-eight public school districts serve the greater Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area. The size of these districts ranges from about 400 students to approximately 41,000 in grades K-12. Significant enrollment increases, aging buildings, and safety problems are widespread. A 1992 report by the Metropolitan Council suggests that providing adequate school facilities and passing bond referenda will be key issues in the remainder of the decade.

This comparative case study investigates strategies, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents thought to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. Particular attention is paid to the leadership role of the superintendent in each of the cases. Four public school districts in the metropolitan area of St. Paul and Minneapolis were randomly selected for the study. Two of the selected districts had successful elections and two were unsuccessful. A comparative study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What election strategies are most commonly used to affect the outcome of school bond referenda and why?
2. Which election strategies are perceived as having the greatest effect on the outcome of school bond referenda and why?

3. Which election strategies most differentiate between successful and unsuccessful school bond referenda and why?
4. How do election strategies compare with other non-strategic factors in deciding school bond referenda?
5. What critical incidents were present, and if so, what effect did they have on the strategic and non-strategic factors and the election outcome?
6. How did the leadership role of the superintendent affect the selection of election strategies and the management of non-strategic factors and critical incidents?

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SETTING

Introduction

Forty-eight public school districts serve the greater Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area. The size of these districts ranges from about 400 students to approximately 41,000 in grades K-12. The eight largest school districts serve more than half of all the students in the seven county area. A 1992 report by the Metropolitan Council suggests that providing adequate school facilities and the prerequisite challenge of passing bond referenda will be key issues in the remainder of this decade (Metropolitan Council, 1992). Increasing enrollment is one of the significant factors.

The Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area has experienced significant growth in the last decade and will continue to grow over the next ten years. In terms of population gain, the area has seen an increase of approximately 255,000 residents between 1980 and 1989. This population gain translated into over 150,000 new households during this period. The Metropolitan Council has predicted an additional 100,000 residents by the year 2000 (Metropolitan Council, 1989). Nearly every community in the region is expected to grow between 1990 and 2000 (Metropolitan Council, 1992).

Public school enrollment is projected to increase 50,000 statewide between 1994 and 2000 (Minnesota State Planning Agency, 1994). Much of this growth will be concentrated in the seven county metropolitan area where the K-12 enrollment "bottomed out" in 1984. Since that time the number of public school students has grown steadily. Kindergarten enrollment has increased approximately 8,000 students since 1980, and total enrollment in K-12 grew nearly 20,000 students between 1984 and 1989. This trend will continue over the next decade with an additional 20,000 students in the metropolitan area in the 1993-94 school year alone (Minnesota Department of Education [MDE], 1992).

In 1993-94, K-12 public school enrollment in the seven country area was 66,000 higher than it had been ten years before. Total enrollment is expected to grow an additional 30,000 by the 1998-99 school year (MDE, 1994). By the 1996-97 school year, it is projected that 31 of the 48 school districts in the seven county metropolitan area will be overcrowded (Metropolitan Council, 1992). Enrollment increases is only one of the problems complicating facility planning.

The age and condition of schools, in addition to the enrollment increases, challenge school districts. A national study done by Honeywell Corporation states that "...25% of the nation's schools are shoddy places to learn. They lack sufficient space, suitability, safety and maintenance..." (Honeywell, 1989). According to the U.S. Government Accounting Office (1995), our nation will have to invest

$112 billion to repair or upgrade school facilities. Minnesota is experiencing similar problems. "Many school children are faced with learning environments that are inadequate due to buildings that are aging, in severe need of repair, and out of compliance with health and safety requirements" (MDE, 1992).

The Minnesota Department of Education survey reports that 25% of Minnesota's school buildings are in inadequate condition. Statewide, over 600 buildings are over fifty years old and only 3% of the facilities have been built between 1980 and 1988 (MDE, 1990). Within the seven county metropolitan area, forty-eight school districts were using 491 school buildings as of September 1992 with a replacement value of $3.5 billion (Metropolitan Council, 1992). Many of these public school buildings are overcrowded and in poor repair. Approximately 15% of school buildings or additions are more than fifty years old (Metropolitan Council, 1992).

Safety problems such as the presence of asbestos, lead, and radon and fire, life safety, and accessibility violations are also prevalent. "The vast majority of the region's schools, 88% of those surveyed, are in need of major repair" (Metropolitan Council, 1992). The Minnesota State Fire Marshal's inspection report from July of 1991 to April of 1992 cites other problems. Of the 225 inspections during this period, there were a total of 955 exit violations and 418 construction or structural violations (Minnesota State Fire Marshall Division, 1992). Public schools in the state are in need of 150 million dollars of repairs (Minnesota State Planning Agency, 1994).

Minnesota schools will also require a major investment in improving or modifying instructional spaces and providing needed technology. As much as 100 million dollars annually will need to be invested in technology from 1995 to the year 2000. This figure does not include staffing or training costs. Three out of four computers currently in classrooms are out of date and the student to computer ratio is two times the recommended level (MSPA, 1994). It has also been determined that many schools have inadequate laboratories and spaces for large group instruction (United States Government Accounting Office, 1995).

Enrollment increases and aging buildings have resulted in a significant number of bond elections and major school construction activity in Minnesota in the latter half of the 1980's. Metropolitan bond referenda generally resulted from growth while rural areas addressed replacement or improvement of facilities. Although many of these elections provided districts with the resources to address facility needs, many others were unsuccessful--about a 40% average failure rate in 1991, 1992, and 1993 elections.

The Minnesota Department of Education reports fifty-four bond questions in 1991 requesting bonding authority totaling $392,880,630. Only fifty-four percent of the elections were successful with twenty-five of the proposals defeated. In 1992, thirty-five bonding proposals went to the voters with 68% of the elections successful. The total amount of approved projects totaled $341,071,902. Fifty-two bond elections were conducted in 1993 (excluding cities of the first class) with thirty-six successful. Proposed bonding authority exceeding $760,000,000 set a new record in 1993. During this three year period, about four out of ten of the bond elections were defeated at the polls (MDE).

Providing adequate school facilities to meet these growing needs in the metropolitan area will be a major leadership challenge in the next decade. "...If educators provide effective political influence, most citizens will support quality schools. Such support will not arise, [however], in a spontaneous ground swell; educators will have to provide vigorous political leadership to earn it" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, p. 5). This leadership cannot be fulfilled without an understanding of election strategies, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents that affect the outcome of school bond referenda. Particular attention also needs to be paid to the leadership role of the superintendent. This is the topic of my study.

The Statement of the Problem

This comparative case study investigates strategies, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents thought to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. Particular attention is paid to the leadership role of the superintendent in each of the cases. Four public school districts in the metropolitan area of St. Paul and Minneapolis were randomly selected from the pool of districts that conducted bond referenda in 1992 or 1993. Two of the districts were selected from the set of successful bond elections and two from the set of unsuccessful elections. Other criteria considered in establishing the pool of eligible districts included the date of the election (with a preference to more recent referenda), geographical proximity, and the general comparability of districts.

Knowledgeable respondents in each of the four school districts completed a survey questionnaire and interview.

A comparative study of the school districts participating in this research describe, analyze, and interpret answers to the following general question: What effect does the use or non-use of different election strategies have on the outcome of school bond referenda? Significant questions that relate to the basic question are the following:

1. What election strategies are most commonly used to affect the outcome of school bond referenda and why?
2. Which election strategies are perceived as having the greatest effect on the outcome of school bond referenda and why?
3. Which election strategies most differentiate between successful and unsuccessful school bond referenda and why?
4. How do election strategies compare with other non-strategic factors in deciding school bond referenda?
5. What critical incidents were present, and if so, what effect did they have on strategic and non-strategic factors and the election outcome?
6. How did the leadership role of the superintendent affect the selection of election strategies and the management of non-strategic factors and critical incidents?

The Delimitations

This study will be limited to four public school districts.

This study will not evaluate the merits of any of the four bonding proposals.

This study will not measure or evaluate the competence or personal qualities of the Boards of Education, administration, staff, volunteer committees, or individuals.

The Definitions of Terms

Bond Referendum. A bond referendum is an election within a public school district to improve, expand, replace, or build new school facilities or purchase equipment or land for school use.

Strategic Factor. A strategic factor is one element of the set of various methods selected and designed to form a plan to affect the outcome of school bond referenda.

Non-Strategic Factor. A non-strategic factor is a contextual variable that affects the outcome of school bond referenda. Piele and Hall (1973) categorize these variables as environmental, socioeconomic, and psychological factors.

Critical Incident. A critical incident is an unplanned, unexpected event occurring within a relatively close period before the vote that potentially affects the use of strategic factors, non-strategic factors, and the outcome of the election.

Respondent. The set of respondents in each case study includes the board members, staff, volunteers, and other citizens participating in depth interviews or surveys about the bond election in their community.

Superintendent Leadership. Superintendent leadership, in this context, is defined as the functional role and set of decisions and actions of the superintendent related to use of strategic factors, non-strategic factors, and management of critical incidents intended to influence the outcome of school bond referenda.

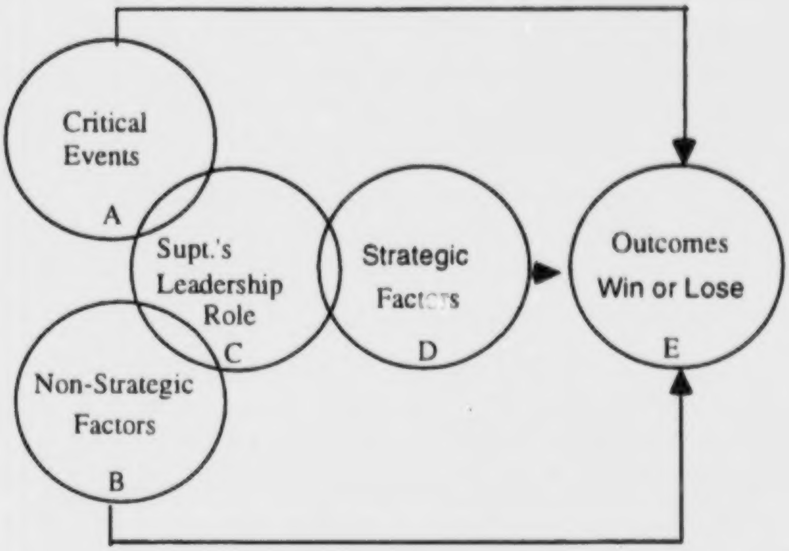
Conceptual Framework

Some school bond referenda are successful and others are defeated. Various factors affect the outcomes of these elections. Some of these factors are strategic in nature; school districts choose to use or not use specific strategies or methods intended to affect the outcome of bond referenda. Other factors are non-strategic in nature and out of the control of local school districts. Sometimes critical incidents enter the election scene unexpectedly and influence the outcome of the election. The leadership role of the superintendent interacts with these other variables and presumably makes a difference in the outcome of the election.

This study is based on a conceptual framework that non-strategic factors, strategic factors, and critical incidents affect the outcome of school bond referenda. The model further suggests that non-strategic factors and critical incidents affect both the selection and use of specific strategies and the outcome of school bond referenda. Particular attention is paid to the leadership role of the superintendent within this context. This conceptual framework is depicted in the table that follows.

FIGURE 1.1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK


Critical Events
A
Supt.'s Leadership Role
C
Strategic Factors
D
Outcomes Win or Lose
E
Non-Strategic Factors
B

Cell A contains critical events that, when present, are thought to affect the superintendent's leadership role in Cell C, the selection of strategic factors in Cell D, and the outcome of the election in Cell E. Cell B contains a summary and organization of non-strategic factors thought to affect the superintendent's leadership role in Cell C, the selection and use of strategic factors in Cell D, and the outcome of the election in Cell E. Cell D contains the set of strategic factors selected and used during the campaign which are thought to affect the outcome of the election. Cell E is the set of all winning and losing bond elections. The model further suggests that critical events and non-strategic factors have the potential to directly affect the outcome of the election separate from the influence of the superintendent's leadership role and the selection and use of strategic factors. The organization and content used in Cells A, B, C, and D are adapted from the work of Philip Piele and John Hall (1973), Lorraine Boyle (1984), and William Wood (1990).

The leadership role of the superintendent within the conceptual framework is studied within four leadership dimensions outlined by Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal (1991). The conceptual framework is based on the belief that the capacity to reframe critical issues and use more than one dimension to make judgments about appropriate actions are critical to the leader's effectiveness. Bolman and Deal identify four dimensions: the human resource dimension, the structural dimension, the political dimension, and the symbolic dimension.

The structural frame relates to coordinating, controlling, planning, goal-setting, and clarifying expectations. The human resource frame includes understanding each individual's feelings, needs, preferences, abilities, and desire for participation. The political frame focuses on the conflict among different constituencies, interest groups, and organizations. The symbolic frame relates to institutional identity, culture, and symbols that are projected to different audiences (Bolman & Deal, 1992). The role of the superintendent in Cell C will be studied within these leadership dimensions.

Assumptions

The first assumption. Public school districts will continue to function as organizational units and have the authority and need to conduct school bond referenda.

The second assumption. All relevant election strategies are identified and included in the instrument.

The third assumption. Public school districts will continue to have supporters and opponents using election strategies to affect the outcome of school bond referenda.

The fourth assumption. All reported data will accurately reflect what substantively occurred.

The Importance of the Study

Each year an alarmingly high number of school bond elections are defeated in the United States. It is becoming increasingly difficult to pass school bond referenda. Both the number and the percentage of successful school bond referenda have decreased over the last three decades. Piele and Hall note that "...[i]n the early 1960's voter approval was frequently viewed as a formality. Today, however, voter approval is often the most significant hurdle facing school officials attempting to meet specific educational demands and needs" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 2).

Factors such as the baby boom "echo," migration from rural to urban areas, rural consolidation, and aging buildings constructed in the 1940's and 1950's have created the need for new school construction. It is incumbent upon school people to understand school bond referenda research and furnish the kind of leadership needed to pass these elections. "An unsuccessful election reduces educational opportunities for students...and downgrade[s] education by forcing overcrowded conditions, double sessions, and other improvisations for lack of adequate resources" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, p. 4). Orchestrating a successful bond referendum is a difficult task. Potential disagreements among members of the board of education, within the staff, and in the community are always present. Choosing a building site, dealing with environmental concerns, selecting a contractor, coming up with an acceptable design, setting attendance boundaries, and getting parents to relinquish ties to an old, established school can generate as much debate as how much the building program costs. "...[S]chool construction isn't just bricks and mortar--it's one of the most politically charged challenges your board is likely to face" (Zakariya, 1988, pp. 27-30).

This comparative case study describes, analyzes, and interprets two successful and two unsuccessful bond referenda in four suburban school districts in Minnesota. The conclusions drawn from their experiences contribute to the practitioner's understanding of strategic factors, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents thought to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. The study also helps to understand the leadership role of the superintendent in this context.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

"Education officials need to furnish leadership in school elections....An unsuccessful election reduces educational opportunities for students" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, p. 4). Few would argue with this simple statement; however, providing effective leadership is not that easy. Every election is unique, and there is no pat formula that will consistently work in various school districts over time. There is also no guarantee that a successful election strategy in a neighboring school will work in your community. The research on bond elections, best summarized in Budgets, Bonds, and Ballots by Piele and Hall (1973), makes this point clear. To miss this reality is to fall short of Kimbrough and Nunnery's call for leadership.

Educational leaders are faced with this challenge because of the unique nature of different school districts and communities. Contextual variables that are environmental, socioeconomic, or psychological in nature predispose voters within a community to vote in certain ways. These contextual variables are largely outside the control of the school practitioner. An important part of leadership, however, is to understand and account for these characteristics in both the preparation and organization of the bond election campaign. Of particular importance are the selection and uses of campaign strategies.

Unlike non-strategic factors that are contextual and environmental in nature, the selection and use of campaign activities are strategic and intentional. Many studies have used Budgets, Bonds, and Ballots as a foundation to test a variety of campaign strategies in many settings. Although practitioners need to approach campaign planning from a research point of view, the challenge expands beyond simply identifying promising practices in the literature. Part of the art of leadership is to understand bond election research and then tailor specific strategies to the non-strategic setting. The campaign plan then becomes a carefully woven fabric of strategies designed to interact with and influence the environment within the school district.

A school leader also needs to maintain a flexible and fluid approach to implement the bond election campaign plan because unexpected critical incidents sometime require a modification in the strategic approach. Sudden turns in the economy, political upheaval, an unexpected change in leadership, or a critical personnel issue are examples of critical incidents that can affect the outcome of a bond election. The extent to which these events influence the voting environment must also be considered.

This review of the literature provides an overview of research summarizing factors that affect the outcome of bond referenda. The first section summarizes the non-strategic, environmental factors. The second section reviews strategic factors related to campaign strategies. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how critical incidents, when present, interact with other factors to influence decision-making and the outcome of bond elections.

Non-Strategic Factors

Philip Piele and John Hall's Budgets, Bonds and Ballots (1973), provides the broadest study and categorization of research findings dealing with bond elections. The authors summarize research conducted in the 1960's through the early 1970's. A total of sixty-one variables are analyzed and categorized within six identified factors affecting the outcome of bond elections. Research studies for each of the variables are labeled as being significantly positive, negative, or not statistically related to the results of these elections. These factors are as follows:

1. School District Characteristics: Wealth and Organization
2. Election Characteristics
3. Voter Demographic Characteristics
4. Voter Psychological Characteristics
5. Information Factors, Source and Content
6. Political Characteristics

Lorraine Boyle, in a 1984 doctoral dissertation on bond elections, expands on the foundation provided by Piele and Hall by analyzing research conducted between 1973 and 1983 within the same general framework. This section of the study summarizes the findings of Piele and Hall and Boyle for these non-strategic factors and extends analyses of more current research within the context of the analytical framework.

School District Characteristics: Wealth and Organization

Piele and Hall identify twenty variables related to School District Characteristics: Wealth and Organization. Boyle categorizes these variables in terms of direction of correlation related to bond election outcomes in the following table (Boyle, 1984):

TABLE 2.1

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDY TOTALS ON VARIABLES RELATED TO FACTOR I: SCHOOL DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS; WEALTH AND ORGANIZATION

Variables	Direction of Correlation		
	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Board Solidarity	4	0	0
Teacher-Pupil Ratio	0	0	1
Use of Bussing	0	0	1
Per Pupil Expenditure	3	0	7
School Ownership	2	0	4
Board Control	2	0	2
School District Type	1	0	3

Board Status	1	0	1
Board Attitude	2	0	1
Teacher Salary Increases	0	2	5
Property Assessment Rate	9	3	14
Real Dollar Size of Issue	1	4	6
Millage Size	5	3	10
Tax Rate Increase	7	10	1
Taxable Wealth	5	2	9
School District Size	7	7	10
Board Selection Procedures	1	1	2
Board Longevity	1	1	2
Superintendent Experience	2	2	2
District Indebtedness	2	2	2

Boyle (1984) states that board solidarity is positively correlated with successful bond referenda. The preponderance of research since her study continues to support this finding. The remaining variables summarized within this factor are either inconclusive or conflicting in their findings. Other more recent studies add to our understanding of how wealth and organization affect the outcome of school bond referenda.

Pullium (1983) asserts that "[t]otal support by members of the school board is almost always necessary for the success of a school referendum" (pp. 50-51). Henderson supports this finding in a study of eleven Colorado school districts that had successful and unsuccessful school finance elections between 1981 and 1985. He concludes that school board support for the election is one of two variables determined to be of greatest importance to the outcome of the election (Henderson, 1984). The following four studies provide additional information related to this category of factors.

A study of 177 Oklahoma bond elections tests twelve characteristics thought to affect the success or failure of bond elections. Of the three variables found to be significant, one is related to wealth and organization. The actual dollar amount of the building bond issue was determined to be significantly related to the outcome of the election; the larger the request, the less likely it would pass (Moss, 1989). Ough's research supports this finding. In regard to the size of the request, he concludes that the smaller the bond issue amount per resident the greater percentage of affirmative votes. A smaller overall tax levy is correlated to successful elections in the same relationship (Ough, 1991). Although some of the studies summarized by Boyle assert that the size of the issue and overall tax rate are predictive, the conclusions are still mixed (Boyle, 1984).

In addition to the research on issue size, Ough also investigates the variable of school size. While the largest number of studies finds that smaller districts are more likely to be successful, the research results summarized by Boyle are mixed and inconclusive (Boyle, 1984). Ough's study suggests that a greater percentage of increase in student enrollments during the five years before the election results in greater support. Ough does not study school district size as a discreet variable, however (Ough, 1991).

In a study of sixty-three Florida bond elections, Bonney identifies the unemployment rate, prime interest rate, and consumer price index as predictive of success in school bond referenda. Although these variables are not specifically identified in this factor, they are closely related to taxable wealth and tax rate increase (Bonney, 1991).

Wood analyzes eighteen California bond elections. The author makes twelve conclusions from his study of which one relates to this set of factors. The role and experience of the superintendent are examined in this study and are not found to be significant variables to the outcome of the elections (Wood, 1990).

The nature and outcomes of past bond elections are also important and are summarized in the next section of this review.

Election Characteristics

Piele and Hall summarize research findings within eight variables related to election characteristics. In general terms, these studies relate to the election history within the district and analyze to what extent past voting history is predictive of future outcomes across the identified variables. Boyle extends this study and categorizes these variables in terms of direction of correlation related to bond election outcomes. The findings are summarized in the following table (Boyle, 1984):

TABLE 2.2

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDY TOTALS ON VARIABLES RELATED TO FACTOR II: ELECTION CHARACTERISTICS

Variables	Direction of Correlation		
	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Past Voting Patterns (Financial)	10	0	0
Election Frequency	0	1	0
Past Voting Patterns (Other)	5	0	6
Concurrent Elections	2	3	5
Stated Purpose of Issue	8	2	5
Time of Year	7	2	7
Turnout	3	36	7
Election Type	2	2	4

Piele and Hall (1973) assert that, "An areas past voting behavior in school financial elections is a significant indicator of its present voting behavior" (p. 126). Boyle's summary of research supports this conclusion with ten studies showing a positive correlation and none documenting contrary results. While many variables affecting the outcome of an election are within the practitioner's control, it is clear that the election history of the school district also plays a significant role in how successful future boards are at the ballot box.

The second variable of particular significance is voter turnout. This characteristic has been studied extensively, and most data suggest a negative relationship between turnout and affirmative votes. Boyle identifies thirty-six studies supporting this conclusion, more than ten times the number of cases documenting a positive correlation. The 1989 research study by Moss supports the negative correlation between turnout and success. He identifies turnout as one of three key variables predictive of the outcome of bond elections. The same conclusion is made by Ough in 1991 in his study of ninety-eight bond elections in Nebraska. He asserts that "[a] smaller percentage of registered voter turnout for the election suggest[s] a greater percentage of affirmative votes" (pp. 90-91).

All the other variables in Factor II have mixed or conflicting results and did not support conclusions that were generally predictive of future election results.

Voter Demographic Characteristics

The voter demographic characteristics outlined by Piele and Hall are categorized into fourteen variables. Boyle describes these variables in terms of direction of correlation related to bond election outcomes. They are summarized on the following table (Boyle, 1984):

TABLE 2.3

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDY TOTALS ON VARIABLES RELATED TO FACTOR III: VOTER DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Variables	Direction of Correlation		
	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Marital Status	3	0	0
Race	11	2	0
Religious Affiliation	6	0	2
Party Affiliation	5	0	3
Income	29	11	5
Education	29	4	2
Occupation	13	5	2
Socioeconomic Status	10	2	2
Home Ownership	7	0	6
Age	5	26	1
Child Status	23	3	2
Sex	7	3	5
Area of Residence	7	1	2
Length of Residence	8	4	3

Most of the variables summarized above are mixed and inconclusive. Boyle finds the factor of age, however, is negatively correlated with election success or a “yes” vote. This supports the common notion that older voters are more likely to vote "no" in most elections (Boyle, 1984). The preponderance of research supports this contention, although there is also evidence to the contrary in other settings. Burns' research in Ohio examines the variable of age as a predictor of voting patterns. He concludes that the older voter is too heterogeneous to be considered a single voting block (Burns, 1993). Of the remaining variables, race, education, age, and child status have the highest ratios of studies with positive correlations as compared to negative or not significant. These studies paint a profile of the likely yes voter as black, well educated, young to middle age, with one or more children (Boyle, 1984).

The combination of income and socioeconomic status is also cited by Boyle as predictive. Most studies show "...a wealth of supporting evidence that a relationship exists between income and 'yes' voting" (Boyle, 1984, p. 50). Boyle also references Cohen's study in which he concludes that "...income, occupation, and education segregated the pro and con votes more effectively than any of the other correlates of voting, exclusive of the attitudinal scales" (Boyle, 1984, p. 55).

Henderson identifies one of the voter demographic variables as significant in his study of bond elections in Colorado. Wealth of the district is cited as one of four factors most predictive of the outcome of successful elections. In his research, the more wealth within the district, the more likely the election will be successful (Henderson, 1986). In a study of Florida bond elections, Booney concludes that unemployment rate is one of three economic variables predictive of election success. Although not the same as wealth, high or low unemployment rates are directly related to wealth within a school district (Booney, 1991). A study of Oklahoma bond elections identifies the expenditure per child within the district as one of twelve factors positively correlated with successful elections. The higher the expenditure per child within the district, the more likely the proposal will pass. This greater level of spending suggests a community demographic profile of relatively greater wealth (Moss, 1989). Wood also recognizes the importance of demographics in his 1990 study of California bond elections. In his words, "[d]emographics appear to play a major role in the outcome [of bond elections]" (p. 109).

The research of Piele and Hall, Boyle's extension of their work, and many more recent studies confirm that some of the variables within the category of voter demographic characteristics do affect the outcome of bond elections within each community's unique context.

Voter Psychological Characteristics

Factors related to voter psychological characteristics are some of the most interesting and most difficult to segregate and quantify. In a lay person's terms, they are a combination of attitudes, predispositions, and beliefs. Piele and Hall state that "...in many cases the decision [by the voter] concerning taxes is governed by attitudes other than their opinion of the quality of the schools" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 133). According to the psychological model, "...the act of voting or not voting is almost habitual and has little to do with a careful analysis of the situation. Proponents of this theory stress the long range nature of the attitudinal determinants of voting behavior" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 39).

The voter psychological characteristics outlined by Piele and Hall are summarized by Boyle on the following table (Boyle, 1984):

TABLE 2.4

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDY TOTALS ON VARIABLES RELATED TO FACTOR IV: VOTER PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Variables	Direction of Correlation		
	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Civic Improvement	7	0	0
Tax Orientation	4	0	0
Cynicism	0	5	0
Alienation	0	8	0
Ideological Orientation	2	0	3
Cognitive Consistency	1	0	1
Educational Attitudes	11	2	2
Economic Orientation	4	1	2

An orientation supporting a broad range of civic improvements is one of the most consistent variables predictive of yes voting. Piele and Hall conclude from their research that "...the more favorable the citizen's generalized civic improvement orientation the more likely it is he [or she] will vote in favor of a school financial issue" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 128). Often this takes the form of a deep sense of community pride and individuals with this attitude are often significantly involved in the school and community. Wood identifies a closely related variable predictive of yes voting which he characterizes as the community's recognition and acceptance that there is a significant need for building expansion or improvements (Wood, 1990).

Tax orientation is another psychological variable that has been considerably researched with a significant number of studies supporting the finding that attitudes about taxes are related to voting behavior. Piele and Hall characterize this relationship in this way: "...citizens who express positive attitudes toward taxes are more likely to support specific school financial issues than those who do not" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 127). Ough's Nebraska study identifies a closely related variable thought to influence bond election results. A smaller total school district property tax levy results in a greater percentage of affirmative votes (Ough, 1991). Sclafani (1985) also researches the relationship between taxation and support for school bond referenda. The author describes a Public Choice Model developed to explain voting behavior. This is largely an economic construct and explains voting in terms of how much of the public "good" one wants and was willing to buy. According to his research, the quantity of the public goods chosen by the community corresponds to the amount that is desired by the consumer within the context of the median income for that community. "Within this model individual taxpayers aggregate their demands through the practice of voting" (Scalafani, 1985, p. 24). His study further concludes that people are more concerned with the amount of increase in taxes than they are with the level of taxation (Scalafani, 1985).

Piele and Hall cite the work of James Coleman and others in describing other psychological variables thought to affect the outcome of bond referenda. Alienation and cynicism appear to be powerful factors within this dimension. The studies in the preceding table and others more recently conducted generally agree that cynicism and alienation will often result in conflict, organized opposition, and larger voter turnouts. A heated and controversial election stimulates participation by citizens who normally would not vote. "This increment of new voters, when compared with the normal voting pool, is seen as less concerned about community affairs and more likely to exhibit attitudes of cynicism and alienation..." (Peile & Hall, 1973, p. 40).

Chandler (1989) analyzes this variable as it applies to superintendent turnover and develops a model that attempts to predict changes in the superintendency in relationship to conflict and alienation following bond election defeats. Although the prediction model only appears to work at about half the time, Chandler agrees with other researchers that "...community conflict may be an important factor in school district politics. The available evidence appears to suggest that increased rates of community conflict, voter turnout, and negative voting are positively associated" (p. 5). When this cynicism is linked with negative feelings about taxes and school policy, the individual citizen plays his or her only trump card in the form of a "no" vote (Piele & Hall, 1973). Allen adds that "...conflicts, even long buried, are usually aired during school tax election time" (Allen, 1985, p. 90).

Educational attitudes is another variable among the psychological factors that has a preponderance of research suggesting a relationship between positive attitudes and yes voting. Piele and Hall's conclusions are supported by other more recent research. Henderson's study of Colorado bond elections asserts that the general attitude about education and schools is the most important factor in the success or failure of a school bond referendum (Henderson, 1986). Sclafani supports this finding and describes this attitude as a community's perception of how the schools are doing (Sclafani, 1985). It is common in the literature to see this described in generic terms as affiliation with the schools. According to Allen, "...those who believe they know a lot about the school are more likely to vote and more likely to vote yes in a school election" (Allen, 1985, p. 95).

Information Factors, Source and Content

Factors related to how people get their information and to what extents this information influences the outcome of the election are as interesting as they were mixed. Kimbrough recognizes them as "...invaluable means for convincing influentials and citizens in school election campaigns and for providing significant feedback concerning community reception to the schools" (Kimbrough, 1971, p. 141). Research findings related to information factors and source and content include both contextual and strategic variables. In this section of the paper, factors that are more contextual in nature and non-strategic are summarized. Other information factors that are more closely related to the selection of specific strategies or techniques are summarized in another section of the study. Boyle's summary of the work of Piele and Hall (1973) is depicted in the following table (Boyle, 1984):

TABLE 2.5

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDY TOTALS ON VARIABLES RELATED TO FACTOR V: INFORMATION FACTORS, SOURCE AND CONTENT

Variables	Direction of Correlation		
	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Information Source	9	0	1
Voter Participation Stimulants	5	0	1
Length of Campaign	3	0	4
Participation in School Affairs	2	0	2
Newspaper Support	3	0	3
Use of Consultants	0	1	7
Use Advisory Committee	5	2	14
Campaign Technique Effort	21	11	10

One factor stands out in both past and more recent research--an ongoing public relations program. This variable is very important and can positively influence the outcome of a bond election. An ongoing public relations campaign is contrasted from simply "turning it on" prior to the election or expecting more communication just before the big vote. In the later case, "...campaign information tends not to influence choice so much as to reinforce existing preferences" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 84). In updating Piele and Hall's summary of bond election research, Boyle identifies an ongoing public relations program as one of four critical variables influencing the outcome of bond elections (Boyle, 1984). Mancini supports this contention in citing the work of Pullium who concludes that ongoing public relations is one of nine key factors in election success (Mancini, 1987). Henderson identifies this same factor as one of seven variables affecting the outcome of bond referenda (Henderson, 1986). In a study of 146 bond elections in California, the researcher concludes that a positive public relations program begins well in advance of the actual election is correlated with success (Nehls, 1992). Describing a closely related factor, Ritter asserts that voters who "...indicat[e] that their best sources of information about the schools [are] school personnel, school meetings, or school publications [are] more likely to vote in favor of school financial referenda than those who receiv[e] their information from other sources" (Ritter, 1980, p. 259). Ream's study of successful school finance elections in California concludes, in more generic terms, that districts that achieve and maintain a high level of community confidence are usually successful in finance elections (Reams, 1992).

Newspaper support is the last variable in this category that appears to be important. Like other variables described in this study, newspaper support can be examined in either the non-strategic or strategic context. In some school districts, strong support from the newspaper is consistent over time and part of the nature of the community. In this sense, newspaper support can be described as a non-strategic factor. In other situations, developing a plan to seek the support of or use the print media is strategic and intentional in nature. Most of the discussion of newspaper support will be done within the context of strategic factors. Suffice for now to say that most researchers recognize this as an important issue. This is documented by Piele and Hall and supported by Boyle. A 1990 study of bond elections and the media supports this conclusion and identifies media as one of the twelve factors predictive of successful bond elections (Wood, 1990).

Political Characteristics

Although over forty years old now, James Coleman's Community Conflict (1957) contains many insights parallel to the findings of Piele and Hall (1973), Kimbrough and Nunnery (1971), Boyle (1984), and others. The political characteristics within a school district, the formal and informal power structures, community conflict, and the presence of organized opposition all affect voter behavior and the ultimate outcome of the election.

These political characteristics are important both within the community and internal to the school board itself.

Boyle (1984) summarizes three dimensions related to the political setting that are relevant to this discussion. They are summarized in the following table (Boyle, 1984):

TABLE 2.6

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDY TOTALS ON VARIABLES RELATED TO FACTOR VI: POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Variables	Direction of Correlation		
	Positive	Negative	Not Significant
Community Conflict	0	14	2
Interest Group Activity	1	5	1
School Community Relations	1	2	2

Community conflict is an important variable in understanding the outcome of school finance elections. Piele and Hall (1973) document that community conflict could affect both the number and disposition of the voters. As they point out, schools are by nature involved in conflicting and emotional issues. "Many of these [issues] lay dormant until a school election--and sometimes a significant conflict--comes on the scene. At that point it's difficult to identify the real issues" (Piele & Hall, 1973, pp. 81-82). The author cites Coleman's study that characterizes this pattern: specific issues become more general; new issues emerge; and dispassionate disagreement over issues becomes emotional and hostile. In the words of Piele and Hall (1973), "[t]his has a spiraling effect; as the issues become more general and more emotional, they have a broader appeal within the community" (p. 81). As this phenomenon develops into community conflict, the actual content of the issue may become lost or unimportant. Chandler (1989) concludes that "...increased rates of community conflict, voter turnout, and negative voting are positively related" (p. 5). Foerch examines conflict and dissatisfaction in his quantitative study of Texas bond elections. He concludes that school board and superintendent turnover, conflict, and the resulting dissatisfaction are predictive of problems at the polls (Foerch, 1989).

In many cases, interest group activity and organized opposition are closely linked with conflict. Lack of unanimity on the school board can encourage and intensify organized opposition. Piele and Hall (1973) assert that "...the more organized the opposition, the more likely that the election will be defeated. [S]chool issues appear uniquely susceptible to group-based attack" (p. 81). This finding is also supported by Boyle's summary and more recent studies. Moss (1989) researches twelve variables related to bond elections and concludes that the presence of formal interest groups opposed to the bond issue is one of three key variables. Wood's study of eighteen bond elections in California identifies the presence or absence of organized opposition as one of twelve key factors affecting the results of bond elections (Wood, 1990).

Research related to school and community relations reported by Piele and Hall (1973) and expanded by Boyle (1984) are mixed, but generally persuasive that these efforts do make a difference in some contexts. A discussion earlier in the literature review documents the importance of ongoing public relations efforts as compared to a pre-election blitz before election day. Community relations can be influenced in the broadest sense by having an understanding of the norms of the political power structure, the civic beliefs, formal and informal power groups, and the communications system. "The skillful practitioner will work within these systems to encourage good community relations and influence those individuals and systems most likely to affect the outcome of the election" (Kimbrough, 1973, p. 14).

Tailoring specific election strategies to the non-strategic context in a particular school community is one of the most important and challenging responsibilities of school leadership. The reader will find some overlap as these strategies are reviewed. Is a particular political variable an inherent part of the election environment and non-strategic or does leadership consciously choose to select a strategic variable and affect the election? Also challenging is the realization that strategies appropriate in one school district will probably not work in another. Research related to the selection and uses of election strategies is discussed in "Strategic Factors" of this review.

Strategic Factors

In the Definition of Terms section of this paper, a strategic factor is defined as one element of the set of various methods designed and selected to form a plan to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. Unlike non-strategic factors that are contextual in nature and largely outside the control of the practitioner, these factors are intentionally selected or ignored by either supporters or opponents of the election. An analysis of strategic factors recognizes this intentional characteristic as "...individuals, operating in a political system with competing values, attempt to control, shape, and exercise power" (Conners, 1980, p. 61).

How important are these strategic initiatives? Henderson's study of eleven Colorado school elections reveals that districts using nine key strategies are more likely to succeed. Participants rate campaign strategies as the greatest value to their successful campaigns (Henderson, 1986). Boyle supports this premise and asserts that, "[s]chool district characteristics were even weaker than strategic variables in discriminating between whether districts won or lost referenda elections" (Boyle, 1984, p. 208).

Although discussed in discreet terms, the conceptual model recognizes the interplay between strategic and non-strategic factors and the need for a general understanding of human nature and the voter. This reality is captured by Piele and Hall (1973) in these words: "If the situational elements most easily controlled by school district--information, general campaign efforts, and, within certain limits, cost--continue to be found ineffective in changing the course of election outcomes, and if less easily controlled environmental influences--conflict, district characteristics, and base costs--continue to leave a significant amount of unexplained variance in election outcomes, then the main hope for improving our ability to explain election outcomes seems to rest with our understanding of voter attitudes and predispositions (long-range forces)" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 98).

In this section of the study, I will summarize significant literature and research that relates to strategic factors. Although the categories below are not identical to that of other studies, the nomenclature for selected strategies within these categories is generally adapted from the work of Piele and Hall (1973) and Boyle (1984).

1. Pre-election Strategies
2. Policy Strategies
3. Political Strategies
4. Organizational Strategies
5. Communication Strategies

Pre-election Strategies

Halverson (1986) recognizes the importance of pre-election activities in his study of bond elections in Wisconsin. He states that it is critical "...that before a school district go to the public with a building proposal, they begin by starting to develop a pre-referenda atmosphere within the district" (Halverson, 1986, p. 20).

There are two general categories of pre-election strategies that are particularly important for a school district. The first is assessing the community well in advance of the election including a review of past voting patterns in other finance elections. The second is establishing an ongoing public relations campaign. These two strategic initiatives, in combination, can be just as important as the actual strategies employed during the campaign. These pre-election strategies will be summarized in this section of the study beginning with assessing the community.

The nature and characteristics of a community, and their relationship to voting patterns can be studied in the non-strategic or strategic context. The non-strategic variables are reviewed in another section of this study. The strategic dimension comes into play as the practitioner chooses to implement or ignore the set of factors thought to affect that voting environment once the assessment is done. The act of assessing the community--including past elections--becomes then the strategic initiative. Determining how the community generally feels about its schools is both basic and critically important. This can be done in both formal and informal ways.

James Henderson recognizes this variable in his study of school finance elections in Colorado. The community's general attitude about the schools is identified as a critical variable determining the amount of campaigning necessary to win and as the factor most predictive of the outcome of the election. Among eleven variables identified by Henderson, the community's attitude about the schools is identified as the most important factor (Henderson, p.

1986). Mancini concludes his study by saying, "[p]eople who are involved and committed to the goals of the school district are more likely to vote 'yes'....The best chance of bond issue approval exists in those districts where schools and voters have a history of excellent relations" (Mancini, 1987, p. 31). Wood (1990) also identifies the general climate in the school district as one of twelve factors affecting the outcome of bond elections in California.

Assessing the general climate within a school community can be done with a formal survey. A number of studies identify this pre-election strategy as a key variable to success. Henderson's research on finance elections in Colorado concludes that a key strategy was "[p]olling prospective voters to determine the general population's notions about school needs" (Henderson, 1986, p. 21). Kimbrough (1971) also asserts that opinion polling is critical and a way to "...determine the voters' overall opinions about the schools, their concept of the needs of the school district, and their sources of information about schools" (pp. 104-108). This is important not only in selecting what strategies to employ, but also in making a decision whether or not to conduct the election at that particular time. In a study of Georgia bond elections, published in 1993, Kastory (1993) conducts pre-election surveys in three districts. He finds strong evidence, based upon hypotheses testing, that a survey identifying attitudes and issues is important to success. Boyle (1984) does not find this variable significant in her quantitative study. Wood (1990) also is unable to draw a conclusion about the importance of pre-election surveys.

In studying the community and voting patterns, it is also important to look at the district's history in recent school finance elections. Does the community usually support bond elections, or is there a consistent pattern of controversy and rejection? Piele and Hall emphasize this variable in stating that, "[a] school district's voting behavior in school finance elections is a significant indicator of its present voting behavior" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 126). Henderson (1986) draws the same conclusion from his research identifying past voting patterns as one of eleven key factors in predicting future bond elections. Somewhat related to these findings is Moss' (1989) study that identifies the frequency of recent bond elections within the district as a key factor in predicting future success.

The final initiative related to pre-election strategies is the development of an ongoing public relations campaign alluded to earlier in the discussion of non-strategic variables. An ongoing public relations campaign can be studied within either a non-strategic or strategic framework. If the public relations emphasis has been present over time and part of the district's makeup, it is part of the context. Ongoing public relations can also be a strategic decision, intended to affect the outcome of the election, and made well before the eventual vote. If the decision is strategic in nature, it is important to start soon enough. "Each campaign has an education phase...[that] should precede the actual campaign.... Informing citizens on the need for the projects or the financial condition of the school system occurs mostly during the education phase. Campaigners usually commit a fatal error by trying to educate the electorate while at the same time urging school supporters to vote" (Etheredge, 1989, p. 34).

As the pre-election strategies come to a close, the school board and superintendent are in a position to act strategically on one of the most important policy matter--the actual resolution authorizing the bond election. This is covered in the next section of this study.

Policy Strategies

Policy strategies are those decisions made by the school board at or near the time that the directors actually approve a resolution authorizing a bond election. For purposes of this summary, policy strategies include an unanimous school board, a determination of the content and cost of the proposal, and establishment of the time of year and length of campaign. Literature that relates to these policy strategies is reviewed in this section of the study beginning with the significance of unanimous school boards.

Many of the research studies on bond elections recognize the unanimity of the school board as predictive of election success. "A school board whose members have not reached a consensus on the content and format of the referendum should not embark on a campaign" (Etheredge, 1989, p. 46). Note that the author uses the word consensus as contrasted from a majority decision. Consensus is defined as collective opinion or general agreement. Its root word, "consent," clarifies the definition of consensus to mean acceptance

(The American Heritage Dictionary, p. 149). The key point in Etheredge's statement above is that the school board needs to reach consensus before they take action on the election resolution to ensure that the campaign is launched from an unanimous school board resolution. Most researchers echo similar findings.

Piele and Hall identify seven important characteristics of a school board relevant to school finance elections, one of which was unanimity. In analyzing election outcomes, they simply conclude that "[s]plit boards are less likely to pass elections" (Piele & Hall, 1973, pp. 76-77). Boyle (1984) reaches the same conclusion in her update of their research. Her analysis of bond election studies concludes that an unanimous school board is one of four key variables related to the success of the election. In a study of South Carolina finance elections, split boards lost seventy percent of the time (Etheredge, 1989). Henderson's research of Colorado bond elections identifies school board support as one of the two most important factors in a successful campaign. Conversely, lack of commitment by the school board is one of four variables associated with losing propositions (Henderson, 1986). In a Florida study of bond elections, Surratt (1987) identifies an unanimous school board as one of eight key elements necessary for success. Mancini cites Pullium's research in Georgia in which school board support was one of nine variables found to "...statistically distinguish between successful and unsuccessful school bond referenda" (Mancini, 1987, pp. 32-33).

School board members would be wise to heed Etheredge's opening quote: "A school board whose members have not reached a consensus of the content and format of the referendum should not embark on the campaign" (Etheredge, 1989, p. 46).

Etheredge's reference to content introduces the second element within the category of policy strategies: what and how much to ask for in the bonding proposal. As difficult as it may be to achieve an unanimous school board, it can be even more challenging to strategically determine the optimal nature and cost of the proposal. This strategic decision is a blend of analytic work and intuition as the board attempts to meet the needs and maximize opportunities for students while at the same time determining how much the voters will accept. Sclafani recognizes that this determination is both complex and difficult to predict. In his study of New York finance elections, he finds that "...each district has its own collective demand for education under varying tax cost conditions and the outcome of voting depends on whether the supply of education is greater or less than the collective demand of the functions; ...it is a function of whether or not the community's demand and the school district's supply are in [balance]..." (Sclafani, 1985, p. 25). A number of other studies examine the factor of cost.

Piele and Hall look at issue cost somewhat similar to Sclafani. They conclude that the total dollar amount of the bonding proposal may be less important than its actual tax impact. As the school board approaches this strategic decision, it needs to consider "...if every voter has his [or her] price, what is the price...? Can the district afford to modify a proposal to meaningfully change the number of potential favorable votes?" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 93). Moss' research in Oklahoma evaluates twelve variables thought to affect the outcome of bond referenda. The actual cost of the proposal is identified as one of three variables significantly related to the success or failure of the elections (Moss, 1989). Ough's research conducted in Nebraska finds that the smaller the bond issue request per student the higher percentage of affirmative votes. (Ough, 1991). In a study of California bond elections, Nehls determines that school districts are more successful if they use a pre-election survey to help set the level of proposed bonding. He asserts that the dollar amount of the bond should be determined from a community survey of voters rather than what the architects say is needed (Nehls, 1992). Closely aligned with the issue of cost is Henderson's research that identifies the comparative size of the bonding request as directly related to the amount of campaigning necessary to be successful (Henderson, 1986).

School boards also act strategically at the policy level in setting the date for the election. This decision can be significant both in terms of the time of the year and the corresponding length of the campaign. Notwithstanding statutory limitations, it is important to understand the relationship between the date of the election and other contextual variables that might affect the outcome. Piele and Hall (1973) recognize these relationships in their research in regard to selection of a date, the probable turnout, and the likelihood of success. "Elections held in conjunction with other elections (state or national) that result in a large turnout are less likely to win" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 79). In Halverson's qualitative study of four school districts in Wisconsin, the timing of the elections is found to be important. School districts that are able to demonstrate a real need before and leading up to the actual election date are more successful. In one case, information about the school building program was mailed during the same week that residents received property tax notices which proved to be disadvantageous timing (Halverson, 1986).

Ptacek's research does not support the conclusions of the investigators summarized above. In his study of Wisconsin bond elections, he does not find a significant relationship between election success and the timing of the election (Ptacek, 1990). Although respondents to Boyle's study rank the time of the year very important, this strategy is not statistically significant to the outcome of bond elections in her quantitative analysis (Boyle, 1984).

The length of the campaign is the last of the variables strategic in nature and within the policy control of the school board. Research indicates that the extent to which the length of the campaign affects the outcome is mixed. Pullium (1993) concludes that sponsorship of a bond election at least three months before the vote is one of four significant variables related to success (Pullium, 1983). Nehls (1992) emphasizes the importance of developing a master list of campaign activities and a timetable well before the election. Neiman (1990) asserts that there is a positive relationship between the number of weeks working on the campaign and election success. This was based upon a quantitative study of 139 bond and referendum elections. A minimum of seven months is critical for election success according to Etheredge (1989) while Conyers (1989) identifies a month as the optimal length. Henderson (1986) simply recognizes the importance of setting a timetable of some length. The research by Mancini (1987) identifies a significant relationship between election success and limiting the length of the campaign so that it is not too long. Respondents in Boyle's study conclude that campaign length as very important. This variable is not significantly significant, however, in relationship to election outcome (Boyle, 1984). Although not particularly comforting to the practitioner, the answer is probably best summarized as: it depends. The actual length is determined by how much time is needed to do the strategies and activities necessary to give the school district a reasonable chance to win.

Political Strategies

The importance of political strategies in school bond referenda is expressed by Etheredge in this way: "Remember, a referendum is a political--not an education--campaign" (Etheredge, 1989, p. 39). Unfortunately for the school board, we also know from the research and experience of others that "[s]trategies appropriate in one community will probably not work in another..." (Kimbrough, 1971, p. 35). In this section of the study, research on the following political strategies is summarized: identifying the power structure, attaining city council endorsement, neutralizing no voters, and seeking support from special interest groups.

Identifying the power structure within a community and tailoring political strategies to this power structure is a significant part of election planning. Like many strategic initiatives, they are only relevant and useful within a particular context. For example, "[w]hen power and resources are controlled by a few influentials with many followers, a grass roots campaign which ignores the opinions of the power structure is very difficult to win. If power is held by many different individuals and groups with different interests depending on the issue, a grass roots campaign is probably more appropriate..." (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, pp. 35-36). This study is conducted in suburban settings which can also alter conventional wisdom. "In growing suburbs, the power sometimes is changing so rapidly that districts face a ...mushy, fluctuating political system in which leadership changes rapidly" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, p. 22). Notwithstanding this variability, acting strategically in relationship to the power structure is suggested by the preponderance of the literature.

Endorsements have also been studied within the political framework and can be important to the outcome of a bond election. Since much of the psychological research suggests that people tend to make up their minds early about an election, the timing of various endorsements is also important. Seeking city council endorsement is one such initiative. While the impact of city council endorsement has not been studied broadly within the political dimension, Boyle does identify this variable as one of five strategic initiatives that correlated with election success. This conclusion agrees with an earlier study by Gatt cited in Boyle's study (Boyle, 1984). Mancini also identifies city council endorsement as one of six variables that correlated with successful elections in his study of Ohio bond elections (Mancini, 1987).

Endorsements from individuals can also be important to the outcome of the election. "The personal influence of influentials (opinion leaders) may be a critical factor in legitimizing (making acceptable) school proposals among voters" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, pp. 50-54). Surratt finds that endorsements from key individuals and officials are an important strategic variable in his case study of a bond election in Florida (Surratt, 1987). Nehls is even stronger in his conclusions suggesting aggressive and widespread endorsement activities (Nehls, 1992). This finding is based on his study of 146 bond elections in California between 1983 and 1990. Equally important as orchestrating the endorsements of the supportive voters is trying to limit the negative impact of likely "no" voters.

"No" voters in bond elections are as certain as death and taxes. Piele and Hall assert that "...a very large number of voters and potential voters in school financial elections have made a standing decision about the direction of their vote. Unfortunately for the schools, the standing decision of a great number of people in the voting pool appears to have changed from a majority in support to a majority in opposition" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p.152). Although these words are twenty years old now, both research and the experience of school leaders attest to the relevance of the statement. In many communities, the efforts to pass a bond referendum must include strategies to cope with and neutralize "no" voters.

Allen describes a set of tax protesters present in every community who will usually vote "no". To minimize the impact of the "no" vote, he encourages school leaders not to let other conflicts result in new voters joining forces with this bloc. "[I]t may be impossible to eliminate tax resistance, but perhaps it can be controlled by attempting to reduce other controversies" (Allen, 1985, p. 94). Periodically surveying the residents and having systems in place to informally measure community feelings about the school district provide school leaders with both important data and the opportunity to anticipate and correct problems. This approach neutralizes the "no" voter by keeping that set of residents as small as possible and also takes some of the ammunition away as perceived problems are corrected. This is supported by Chandler who states that "...[c]itizens stimulated to vote by this community conflict have a tendency to cast negative ballots" (Chandler, 1989, pp. 21-22). Research in the political dimension points to other ways to neutralize the impact of "no" voters including cross-pressuring.

The strategy of cross-pressuring is usually characterized by creating a conflicting need or desire that offsets a predisposition to vote "no". An example might be the set of retired adults in a community, many on fixed incomes, concerned about property taxes, and most likely to vote "no". Cross-pressuring recognizes that many of these individuals are also grandparents of children enrolled in the school district. Targeted messages to these voters emphasizing the disadvantages their grandchildren will experience with a failed election may counter their concern about rising taxes. It is often unrealistic to change large numbers of these individuals into "yes" voters. "Persons who are cross-pressured, [however], are likely to react by vacillating on the issue, withdrawing from voting, or deciding late in the campaign how to vote. In some circumstances, school leaders should deliberately introduce issues early that will have the effect of creating cross-pressure on targeted voters" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, pp. 50-54). Etheredge finds similar results in his research. "Persons who change their positions during the campaign usually do so because of cross-pressures, or conflicting attitudes....If one can identify who is experiencing cross-pressures, it is possible to develop information to offer a compromise position that emphasizes the needs of the school" (Etheredge, 1989, p. 36). If successful, the end result will be to partially neutralize the "no" vote.

While cross-pressuring often results in a failure to vote by an affected individual or group, it can also change minds. In a study of Ohio referenda, Mancini identifies seven key variables correlated with success. One of these is to gain the support of the opposition. Kimbrough and Nunnery also emphasize the importance of neutralizing the "no" voters by trying to change the attitudes of influentials opposed to the election. Their research suggests that attempts be made to "...negotiate positions between influentials...so that the needs of education and children are not held hostage to two warring factions" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, pp. 22-23). Discussed in other sections of this study is the power of "no" voters organizing into opposition. One of the most important ways to neutralize the "no" voter is to avoid organized opposition--"the kiss of death" to most bond election initiatives.

Organizational Strategies

It is the responsibility of leadership to organize human resources within the district, not too unlike that of a general organizing the troops for battle. This includes not only the people, but all the interdependent functions necessary to give the school district a chance to win. In addition to the school board and staff, many researchers find that organizing citizens is a key to success. Kimbrough and Nunnery emphasize the need for "...significant and well-organized citizen involvement" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, pp. 108-109).

Organizing citizen advisory committees is one of the bond election strategies most frequently used and studied. Piele and Hall research the use of citizen committees and come to the conclusion that "...the use of a citizen's committee in an election campaign has no influence on the success or failure of a school financial election" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 89). In updating the work of Piele and Hall, Boyle identified six studies that found a positive correlation between use of citizen advisory committees and election success. Two researchers found a negative correlation. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the greatest number of studies (fifteen in all) finds no significant difference (Boyle, 1984).

A number of more recent studies identify the use of citizen advisory committees as predictive of election success. In a study of Colorado bond elections, Henderson identifies eight critical variables in winning bond elections. One of these election strategies is the organization and use of citizen advisory committees (Henderson, 1986). Interviewees who reflected back on the reason for successful bond elections identified good organization and broad citizen involvement as variables correlated with winning campaigns (Henderson, 1986). Mancini's study looks at election strategies used in 133 school districts in Ohio. The purpose of his research is to determine which strategies are statistically predictive of successful elections. Of the seven strategies identified, organization and use of citizen advisory committees is first on the list (Mancini, 1987). Ough's research of ninety-eight Nebraska bond elections postulates similar findings. Use of citizen advisory committees is one of eight key variables predictive of successful bond elections (Ouch, 1991).

The research on using citizen advisory committees is mixed over time and across a variety of studies. Kimbrough and Nunnery (1971) identify the use and organization of citizen advisory committees as critical. Piele and Hall (1973), however, find no significant difference in the use of citizens on advisory committees. Boyle's (1984) update of Piele and Hall's work finds a six to one ratio between studies finding a positive correlation between use of committees and success and compared to those with a negative relationship. The greatest majority of studies, however, find no significant difference. Wood's study of California bond elections also asserts no significant relationship between use of citizen committees and success (Wood, 1990). A number of other recent studies identified organization and use of citizen advisory committees critically important.

Overall, the research on this topic--both quantitative and qualitative--suggests that citizen advisory committees are frequently used in successful bond election campaigns and are perceived to be important. Proving the causality independent from other variables, however, is difficult and inconclusive. This will require the school leader to mix the rigor of research study with the intuition of experience within his or her unique election context. To be sure, bond election campaigns are labor intensive and citizens can provide much needed help and an important base of support.

A decision whether or not to use a campaign consultant is another organizational consideration for the school leader. Boyle investigates the relationship between bond election outcome and use of campaign consultants. In her extension of Piele and Hall's work, she finds no studies confirming a positive relationship between use of consultants and election success. One study cites a negative relationship and seven identify no significant difference. Boyle actually concludes that use of a consultant is negatively correlated with election success (Boyle, 1984). In a 1990 study of bond elections in California, Wood joins the ranks of no significant difference. The use of consultants is studied as one factor in eighteen bond elections and is not found to be predictive of success or failure (Wood, 1990). The weight of the evidence supports the conclusion that it does not make any difference in most settings.

The role and responsibility of the superintendent in bond elections is the last organizational factor that has generated at least moderate attention from researchers. Piele and Hall comment on the potential impact of the superintendent in their summary of research: "The personal qualities and characteristics of school officials are, at least potentially, among a school district's most important resources for influencing voter behavior. Often, the only significant difference between one district's financial election campaign and another district's campaign is the sales[person]--principally school officials--attempting to justify the need for voter approval of new issues" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 75). Despite recognizing this potential impact, their analysis of bond election research concludes that any correlation between the role of the superintendent and the outcome of the election is inconclusive (Piele & Hall, 1973).

Boyle examines three studies related to the role of the superintendent and also researches the frequency of use and perceived importance of this variable. While the organizational role of the superintendent is one of the most frequently used strategies and perceived to be very important by individuals involved in the election, the related hypothesis is not rejected and the superintendent's role is not found to be statistically significant in this quantitative study (Boyle, 1984).

The stability of the superintendent's position and the presence or absence of turnover are closely related issues that have received some attention from educational researchers. Neiman's study of Texas bond elections finds that superintendent turnover in the nine year period before the election is a predictor variable (Neiman, 1990). Moss examines the length of service of the superintendent in his study of Oklahoma bond elections. He does not find this variable to be significantly related to success or failure

(Moss, 1989). A similar conclusion is reached by Wood in California. A study of eighteen bond elections asserts that "...[t]he superintendent does not have a specific role that will help predict the success or failure of a bond election. There apparently is no relationship between the role of the superintendent and election results" (Wood, 1990, pp. 107-109).

It is clear that there is very little research that recognizes the planning and organizational role of the superintendent as a predictive variable. Other more indirect variables--turnover and length of service, and the extent to which the superintendent is an effective spokesperson in selling the election--may be significant in some settings. At best, the research is mixed and inconclusive suggesting that the impact of the superintendent, while perceived to be very important, probably is not one of the most important factors in a majority of bond elections. How the school district manages the communication effort is the last category of strategic factors for review.

Communication Strategies

Developing a strategic plan for communication during a bond election campaign requires the school leader to balance a set of research findings that are as broad and conflicting as they are interesting. A summary of these findings will focus on the content, volume, targeting and application of communication efforts in a particular setting. Research will also be cited that informs the practitioner on the significance of specific strategic variables in the category of communication.

Conventional wisdom suggests that extensive communication efforts, particularly written communication, are the best and most effective way of getting out the message and winning over the skeptics. Piele and Hall (1973) put up at least a cautionary flag to this notion in reporting that "...[m]ost studies suggest that traditional communication techniques do not significantly affect the outcome of an election..." (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 84). In planning the communication strategies, it is important to focus on the right message in that community. Piele and Hall challenge the school leader to concentrate on "...the content--message--as opposed to the particular communication vehicle" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 85). The data drawn from the community survey, done as part of the Pre-election Strategies, should guide the school leader in developing the most effective focus. Communication initiatives will be more effective if they capitalize on the set of themes that are congruent between what the district wants and what the survey says the community will support.

Kimbrough and Nunnery (1971) emphasize the importance of focus and content in their work. In their opinion, the message should clearly describe the benefits to children. Services to children should be highlighted rather than cost to the taxpayers. They go on to recommend child-centered, emotion-laden photographs to be used with the text. The authors also recognize the need to deal with the cost and tax issues directly and honestly, but not emphasized to the same extent (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971). Conyers summarizes a related theme encouraging school leaders to identify a key message --kids and community--and sell the proposal within that framework (Conyers, 1989). This is a common recommendation from practitioners in a multitude of "how to" journal articles.

Wood's study of California bond elections focuses more on the results of communication. He concludes that bond elections are much more likely to be successful in communities in which there is a general understanding and acceptance of a real need (Wood, 1990). Nehls also cites the district's ability to substantiate a need through communication as a predictive variable in his study of California bond elections (Nehls, 1992). Regardless of the form and substance of communication, it should be apparent that gaining a healthy level of community understanding and support cannot be achieved without effective content and focus. The amount of communication is another strategic decision that has captured the interest of educational researchers.

Piele and Hall (1973) emphasize the importance of determining the right amount of communication by warning school leaders not to "...reinforce existing preferences...with a barrage of information from the school district" (p. 84). In the language of the practitioner, this is referred to as a shotgun approach. The authors actually find a null relationship between an increased volume of communication and election success. The potential danger of too much communication is over stimulating the "no" voter resulting in an electorate with a "...larger number of politically less involved than of the population groups more interested in politics" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 88). As many research studies conclude, it is rarely in the best interests of the school district to stimulate a larger turnout on election day.

Conyers summarizes this strategic decision by cautioning: "...why hurt [the] campaign by reminding opponents unnecessarily about the upcoming vote?" (Conyers, 1989, p. 27). Minimizing the written information and contact with the solid "no" group is supported in the literature. Determining how much communication is too much is part of the art of election planning. It is safe to say from the research, however, that an ongoing public relations program highlighted by a moderate amount of well-focused communication prior to the time of the election will be effective in most settings. Choosing the right vehicle and targeting the communication efforts are also important strategic decisions.

The strategic variable of targeting the district's communication initiatives can best be described in what is generically referred to as rifling the election message. This is contrasted from simply saturating the community indiscriminately with multiple mailings and brochures. There is a wealth of quantitative and qualitative studies that conclude that most of the district's communication initiatives should be directed to probable "yes" and "undecided" voters. Although Boyle did not find this strategic variable to be statistically significant, respondents identify targeting "yes" voters as often used and very important (Boyle, 1984). Wood emphasizes the importance of campaign strategies focused on identifying "yes" voters as significantly related to success (Wood, 1990). Similar results were reported by

Kimbrough (1971), Dana (1985), Henderson (1986), Surratt (1987), Etheredge (1989), and Conyers (1989).

Targeting the probable "yes" voter is a common technique and has become a mainstay in school finance elections. As mentioned earlier is this paper, however, it is incumbent for the school leader to interpret this research within the context of demographics. Communities go through life cycles, and targeting "yes" voters can be successful in a community profile characterized by a preponderance of young families with school-age children. As the school district matures and homes with children are no longer the majority, it becomes increasingly risky to put all of your strategic marbles into targeting the "yes" voter. In older and more stable communities, it is still important to target "yes" voters for most of the campaign activities. It is also critical, however, to tailor other election activities to a wider audience with specific strategies and messages.

Much of the bond election research, both non-strategic and strategic, invariably draws the focus back to knowing your community. This prerequisite knowledge provides the school leader with tools to decide how to communicate and with whom. Piele and Hall emphasize this need as follows: "School districts would probably be better off spending more resources on [understanding] their constituency and less on attempts to communicate" (Piele & Hall, 1973, p. 91).

Research and practice make it clear that there is a difference between communicating in a stable community as compared to one that is growing. Running a bond election campaign in overlapping suburbs is different than in a town in which the borders of the city and school district are one in the same. In the words of Etheredge, "...[o]ne needs to understand how people get their information...[and how] much communication occurs from influentials to citizens and how much occurs from citizens to political and community leaders" (Etheredge, 1989, pp. 53-54). Studies conclude that maximum personal contact is important in some communities (Etheredge, 1989). The effective school leader selects from a variety of options based upon the characteristics of the community.

Kimbrough and Nunnery emphasize the importance of understanding the informal communication systems unique to a particular community. These informal channels of communication "...provide invaluable means for convincing influentials and citizens in school election campaigns and for providing significant feedback concerning community reception to the [proposal]" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, p. 14). In addition to understanding the research related to content, volume, and application of communication in a particular community, it is also important to understand the impact of mass media, and particularly, the newspaper.

Piele and Hall cite favorable newspaper support as an important communication goal. Based upon three studies, they conclude that districts receiving this support are more likely to win (Piele & Hall, 1973). Kimbrough and Nunnery come to the same conclusion expressed in a warning to the school leader: "If you get into a battle with the media--particularly print media--try to reason, persuade, and encourage, but never fight. The print media is in a favored position and will always win" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, p.15). Although not found to be statistically significant, respondents to Boyle's study ranks obtaining newspaper support as often used and very important (Boyle, 1984). Boyle cites six studies related to this variable, with three showing a positive correlation between newspaper support and successful election and three showing no significant difference (Boyle, 1984). In a study of eighteen bond elections in California, Wood determines that maintaining local media support throughout the election is positively correlated with successful campaigns (Wood, 1990). The preponderance of evidence suggests that it is beneficial to actively seek support and endorsement from the newspaper. This strategic initiative should stop short, however, of risking a battle with this medium. A newspaper that takes no position is better than one that criticizes the school district's funding proposal as a result of an overly aggressive or negative attempt to gain support.

Critical Incidents

Earlier in this paper, critical incidents were defined as unplanned, unexpected events occurring within a relatively short time before the bond election vote. These incidents, when present, are important to the extent that they have the potential to impact the outcome of the election. Although this variable is of particular interest to the author of this study, neither journal articles nor quantitative or qualitative studies do much to explain the significance of these events. The definition of critical incidents is deliberately limited in terms of time and proximity to the election to differentiate them from other phenomena in the election environment. This study of critical incidents is also different from the wealth of research on community conflict and the relationship between conflict, voter turnout, and election outcomes. This research focus is on those unexpected and unplanned events near the election date that might have affected the use of election strategies and or the outcome of the election.

Suburban districts in the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul that conducted school finance elections in early November of 1987 or 1991 orchestrated the final (and critical) last few weeks of the campaign in an environment consumed with Minnesota Twins baseball mania and two World Series championships. In one of these districts, finance elections conducted in 1985, 1988, and 1989 had generated strong and well-organized opposition. The 1991 election, on the other hand, went through easily without a hint of opposition. The critical and unplanned event of a World Series was not controlled as a variable nor was causality proved. Nonetheless, individuals involved with the election believe the baseball fever during the final weeks of the election campaign did make some difference and was to the district's advantage.

During the first week of December in 1988, a suburban district in the Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area conducted a $15,000,000 bond election. More than 2000 people voted in the election and it lost by 43 votes. This was the year of the great stock market crash. The second wave of falling prices was worse than the first, and the bottom fell out of the market days before the election. Was this critical incident the difference between victory and defeat? Once again, this variable was not isolated for study nor was causality demonstrated. Nearly everyone on the referendum committee, however, believed that the election would have passed in the absence of this critical incident.

In 1985 a St. Paul suburban school district was in the midst of a reverse referendum. Minnesota law permitted residents of the school district to petition the school board to reconsider excess levy authority approved in an earlier election. Given a minimum number of signatures, the school district was required to vote again on the issue. State law required that the ballot be stated in the same language as the petitioners' desired outcome: "Shall the levy authority of the school district previously approved be revoked?" Supporters of the school district, who had previously voted "yes" (to give the approval in the earlier election), now had to be instructed to vote "no". This communication challenge was met with a strategy of printing nearly 3000 signs that read: "Vote No on November 7!" Supporters were asked to put these in their car windows the last week of the campaign.

A neighboring district, with hundreds of residents using the same shopping mall on a daily basis, was conducting a referendum election on the same date. Their supporters needed to vote "yes" in order for the school district's finance proposal to be successful. The neighboring school district's election lost by less than ten votes. The superintendent expressed frustration with the outcome of the election to this researcher and described the many calls of confusion from district residents seeing the "Vote No on November 7!" signs throughout the mall parking lot. Some voters were confused about how to vote not knowing that the signs referred to another school election. Others, perhaps among the undecided, assumed that significant, organized opposition had emerged and began to question their original support. The superintendent reported that many individuals involved in this losing campaign were certain that this critical and unplanned event made the difference in a very close election.

One research study on bond elections deals directly with this variable. A second study is aligned closely with the concept of critical incidents even though it did not use this nomenclature. William Wood's qualitative study in California focuses on eighteen bond elections conducted between 1987 and 1989. The sample contains an equal number of successful and unsuccessful elections. One of the research questions attempts to evaluate to what extent critical and unplanned events, when present, affect the outcome of the elections. Wood's twelve research findings lead to the conclusion that "[t]he presence or absence of critical incidents was significant" (Wood, 1990, pp. 107-109). Nine of the districts conducting successful bond campaigns report that there were no critical incidents or uncontrollable factors that impacted the election. Conversely, all nine districts with losing elections report a critical incident or uncontrollable factor affecting the voting. These critical incidents range from the stock market crash to two pages of critical letters published the night before the election. The common thread is that they are unexpected, perceived as significant in impact, and occurring very late in the campaign (Wood, 1990).

A second research project by Mancini examines bond elections in 133 school districts in Ohio. Two demographic variables are found to be significantly related to the outcome of the elections. One of the two was the success of the athletic teams in the district at the time of the elections which is reminiscent of the World Series mania described above (Mancini, 1987). The presence and potential impact of critical incidents is one of the research questions to be explored in this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Research Methodology

This study will be primarily qualitative in nature. The research methodology was selected as an outgrowth of a theoretical framework grounded in the notion that factors affecting the outcome of bond elections are complex, unique to the context, and often times abstruse as compared to what would seem obvious. Going beyond a survey and its mathematical analysis to a deeper, ethnographic study creates an opportunity that Miles and Huberman describe as seeking "...serendipitous findings and...new theoretical integrations; they help the researchers go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 15).

Qualitative methodology is particularly useful to root the meaning out of the setting. These data are "...a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts. With qualitative data, one can preserve chronological flow, assess local causality, and derive fruitful explanations" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 15). The disciplinary orientation of the case study research will be ethnographic. Qualitative data will be collected, analyzed, compared, and interpreted from four cases. The method will be guided by an inductive approach in which data from the four school districts will be examined.

The methods and procedures for qualitative research used in this study are those developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman. They consist of guidelines for data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing/verification. Primary and secondary data will be collected from a survey, interviews, historical documents, newspapers, and other germane election documents.

Data will be reduced through a process of "...selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the 'raw' data" (Miles & Huberman, p.21). Data will then be displayed or organized in a way that permits preliminary conclusion drawing. As conclusions are made and then verified, the researcher will begin to look for what the data actually mean (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Case analysis and cross-case analysis summaries will be written to reflect these conclusions.

The study will also include analysis of quantitative data. Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize an analytical survey in the four sample districts. The survey instrument was adapted from similar tools used by Lorraine Boyle (1984) and David Mancini (1987). The selection and use and perceived importance of various election strategies will be measured and compared to data obtained through qualitative techniques. Verification tactics for testing and confirming findings will be used for quality control.

In doing case studies that collect and analyze data through the use of qualitative methods, it is necessary to triangulate. This will be partially accomplished by using four cases and collecting and analyzing data from both structured interviews and documents. Triangulation will also be accomplished through analysis of descriptive statistics of an analytical survey completed in the four selected districts.

Comparative Case Studies

A comparative case study "...is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (Merriam, 1988, p.10). The cases might be selected because they are instances of some concern, issue, or hypothesis. These studies are interpretive in nature and bound within the context of the cases. Merriam describes case studies as:

1. More concrete
2. More contextual (experiences are rooted in context rather than being abstract)
3. More developed by reader interpretation as readers bring to a case study their own experience and understanding which lead to generalizations
4. Based more on reference populations determined by the reader; in generalizing as described above, readers have some population in mind (Merriam, 1988, p. 15).

Comparative case studies organize the data by specific cases and study each in depth. Case data include all the interview data, the observational data, the documents, impressions and statements over time. After the data are collected, they are organized into case records for use in subsequent analysis.

Case studies provide a substantial data base by trading the breadth of material gathered from many subjects for the depth and quality of material available in a single case study site (Halverson, 1986). Success in these studies "...depends on knowing when to be more or less structured in data collection, when to slide to a numeric or the narrative end during data transformation, and when to opt for journalistic as opposed to statistical analysis. Case studies...represent a sort of third force...that can transcend the weaknesses of purely qualitative or quantitative methods" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.121).

Triangulation

Triangulation can be defined as "...the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon; the focus always remains with the same phenomenon, but the mode of data collection varies. Triangulation tests both external and internal validity utilizing multiple methods to reveal different aspects of the phenomenon being studied" (Jick, 1979, p. 4).

"Triangulation may also help to uncover the deviant or off-quadrant dimension of a phenomenon. Different viewpoints are likely to produce some elements which do not fit a theory or model...[and] serve as the critical test, by virtue of its comprehensiveness, for competing theories" (Jick, 1979, p. 604). It is important that these theories are examined so that the researcher's theoretical framework does not blind the study to important insights.

Jick further recommends mixing qualitative and quantitative methodologies, particularly survey data and fieldwork. This technique was employed in this study. The survey data supplement and help triangulate the interviews, document review, observation and unobtrusive measures. Both data and methodology triangulation will all be used to increase the reliability of the study.

Interviewing

Interviewing will be an important part of data collection in this study. Stewart defines interviewing as a "...process of dyadic, relational communication with a predetermined and serious purpose designed to interchange behavior and involving the asking and answering of questions" (Stewart, 1988, p. 3). The interviews were dyadic in that they were all between two people, the researcher and the respondent. The word relational in the definition suggests that a relationship was developed in the interview in order to draw the most meaning from the encounter. The purposefulness of it means that at least one of the two parties prepared for the interview with a goal in mind.

In order to collect useful and reliable data, the researcher needs to understand the purpose of the interview. Patton notes that the reason to interview is "...to find out what is in and on someone else's mind....We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe....We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on...[so] we have to ask people questions about those things" (Patton, 1980, p.196). In qualitative studies, the researcher concentrates on the quality of the interviews and the potential of each respondent to add meaning to the data rather than the number of samples. The researcher is seeking insight and understanding of the phenomenon. (Merriam, 1988).

The qualitative interviews used in this study employed a semistructured interview guide for consistency, but also employed open-ended questions to allow the respondent to frame issues from their perspective. "This, in fact, is an assumption fundamental to qualitative research--the participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (Wahlstrom, 1990, p. 82).

Patton identifies the key advantages of interviewing:

1. The interview provides more opportunity to motivate the respondent to supply accurate and complete information immediately.
2. The interview provides more opportunity to guide the respondent in his interpretation of the questions.
3. The interview allows a greater flexibility in questioning the respondent.

4. The interview allows greater control over the interview situation.
5. The interview provides a greater opportunity to evaluate the validity of the information by observing the respondent's nonverbal manifestations of his attitudes toward supplying this information (Patton, 1980).

The specific interview technique used in this study is the semistructured approach. This approach has the advantage of being reasonably objective while still permitting a more thorough understanding of the respondent's opinions and the reasons behind them than would be possible using the mailed questionnaire. It provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth that allows for the collection of valuable data that could not be successfully obtained by another approach.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study will be the four selected school districts. Using the school district as the unit of analysis will permit the researcher to survey the experiences and perceptions of stakeholders within the school district each of whom have unique perspectives.

Selection of Case Study Sites

The four school districts will be selected based upon the following criteria:

1. All four school districts will be suburbs of St. Paul or Minneapolis. The selection will be limited to this geographic area to make it practical to conduct field research in these districts.
2. All four districts will be randomly selected from those having a bond election in 1992 or 1993. Selecting districts that have had a recent experience will make it more likely that the key informants are still available and that the data and informant's recollection of the elections are still intact.
3. Two districts will be randomly selected from the pool of districts that have had a successful bond election and two will be randomly selected from the pool that have had an unsuccessful bond election. This will allow the researcher to describe, analyze, and interpret answers to the research questions across districts and between sets of districts with different results.

Selection of Subjects

The individuals interviewed will be persons who have knowledge about strategies used to affect the outcome of the bond referendum. It will include individuals such as school board members, the superintendent and other administrators, other school staff members, members of the community, persons in elected positions within the cities, and other representative stakeholders knowledgeable about the issue in question. Other individuals may be selected on the basis of positional or reputational characteristics as they will be identified later in the data collection process. Final decisions about who to interview will be made based upon triangulating the responses and suggestions of other respondents. It is anticipated that eight to twelve interviews will be conducted at each site which should be adequate to develop the case and cross-case analysis and also feasible for the researcher to complete.

The Data

The data of this research will be of two kinds: primary data and secondary data. The nature of each of these two types of data will be given briefly below.

The primary data. The responses to a questionnaire from knowledgeable participants interviewed in the selected districts will be primary data. On-site interviews of persons who had a role in the bond referenda will be conducted. These interview responses from knowledgeable participants in the sample districts will be another type of primary data. The information from these primary data sources will provide detailed and in-depth accounts of the significant events.

The secondary data. Published and unpublished books, journals, dissertations and theses dealing with bond election strategies, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents will be secondary data. Secondary data will also be gathered from historical documents such as official board minutes, the election ballot, informational material distributed by the school district and other groups working for or against the referendum, newspaper articles, and architectural and financial documents.

The Criteria for the Admissibility of the Data

Data will be collected only from respondents that were involved in some way with the bond referendum process at the time of the election. Admissibility of the data will be based upon using techniques such as 1) triangulating, 2) weighting the evidence, 3) checking the meaning of outliers, 4) using extreme cases, 5) ruling out spurious relations, 6) replicating a finding from one site to another, 7) checking out rival explanations, 8) looking for negative evidence, and 9) getting feedback from informants (Miles & Huberman, 1984, pp. 230-243).

The questions will be field-tested with individuals who were not part of the study, but who had prior experience in school bond referenda. All interviews were done by a single individual properly trained to use the data gathering technique.

Specific Treatment of the Data for Each Subproblem

Subproblem one. Which election strategies are most commonly used to affect the outcome of school bond referenda and why?

The Data Needed

The data needed for the solving of subproblem one are (a) the names of the school district officials and other individuals who are knowledgeable about the election, (b) the responses of the four criterion groups to a survey instrument measuring the selection, use, and importance of various election strategies, (c) the record of responses from interviews of knowledgeable individuals, and (d) documents relevant to the bond election in each district. Election documents are located in the school district offices and at the offices of newspapers providing coverage for each of the districts.

The Location of the Data

The identification data are located within the selected school district. The responses of the criterion group in the four selected districts are located within that population.

The Means of Obtaining the Data

Each of the four school districts that are selected will provide the researcher with written permission to conduct the study and release the data. Data will be obtained by reviewing documents including official school district documents and newspapers. Data from the criterion group in the four selected districts will be obtained through administration of the survey instrument to knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts. Qualitative data will be obtained through structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts.

The Treatment of the Data

How the Data Will Be Screened. The completed surveys of the criterion group in each of the four school districts will be screened to eliminate those where the respondent fails to meet the criteria for a knowledgeable individual. Data obtained through structured interviews will be screened on the same basis. Data from documents will be triangulated and analyzed for validity.

How the Item Analysis Will Be Made. The criterion response data will be treated by performing an item analysis to determine an average score for each response measuring the frequency of use of various election strategies. Data from structured interviews and documents will be reduced, analyzed, and verified, consistent with the methodology espoused by Miles and Huberman as previously referenced.

How the Data Will Be Interpreted. Survey data from criterion groups in the four selected districts will be compared to data obtained through structured interviews and document analysis. All data will be interpreted after reduction, analysis, and verification as espoused by previously referenced Miles and Huberman.

Subproblem two. Which election strategies are perceived as having the greatest affect on the outcome of school bond referenda and why?

The Data Needed

The data needed for the solving of subproblem two are (a) the responses of the four criterion groups to the survey instrument measuring the selection, use, and importance of various election strategies, (b) record of responses from knowledgeable individuals, and (c) documents relevant to the bond election in each district.

The Location of the Data

The identification data are located within the selected school district. The responses of the criterion group in the four selected districts are located within that population. Qualitative data will be obtained through structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts.

The Means of Obtaining the Data

Each of the four school districts that are selected will provide the researcher with written permission to conduct the study and release the data. Data will be obtained by reviewing documents including official school district documents and newspapers. Data from the criterion group in the four selected districts will be obtained through administration of the survey instrument to knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts. Qualitative data will be obtained through structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts.

The Treatment of the Data

How the Data Will Be Screened. The completed surveys of the criterion group in each of the four school districts will be screened to eliminate those where the respondent fails to meet the criteria for a knowledgeable individual. Data obtained through structured interviews will be screened on the same basis. Data from documents will be triangulated and analyzed for validity.

How the Item Analysis Will Be Made. The criterion group response data will be treated by performing an item analysis to determine an average score for each response measuring the importance of various election strategies. Data from structured interviews and documents will be reduced, analyzed, and verified, consistent with the methodology espoused by previously referenced Miles and Huberman.

How the Data Will Be Interpreted. Survey data from criterion groups in the four selected districts will be compared to data obtained through structured interviews and document analysis. All data will be interpreted after reduction, analysis, and verification as espoused by previously referenced Miles and Huberman.

Subproblem three. Which election strategies most differentiate between successful and unsuccessful school bond referenda and why?

The Data Needed

The data needed for the solving of subproblem three are (a) the responses of the four criterion groups to the survey instrument, (b) the record of responses from knowledgeable individuals, (c) documents relevant to the bond election in each district, and (d) the outcome of the elections in each district.

The Location of the Data

The identification data are located within the selected school districts. The responses of the criterion group in the four selected districts are located within that population. Election documents are located in the possession of the criterion group in each school district, in the school district offices, and at the offices of newspapers providing coverage for each of the districts.

The Means of Obtaining the Data

Each of the four school districts that are selected will provide the researcher with written permission to conduct the study and release the data. Data will be obtained by reviewing documents including official school district documents and newspapers. Data from the criterion group in the four selected districts will be obtained through administration of the survey instrument to knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts. Qualitative data will be obtained through structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts.

The Treatment of the Data

How the Data Will Be Screened. The completed surveys of the criterion group in each of the four school districts will be screened to eliminate those where the respondent fails to meet the criteria for a knowledgeable individual. Data obtained through structured interviews will be screened on the same basis. Data from documents will be triangulated and analyzed for validity.

How the Item Analysis Will Be Made. The criterion group response data will be treated by performing an item analysis to determine an average score for each response measuring the importance and frequency of use of various election strategies for successful and unsuccessful elections. Data from structured interviews and documents will be reduced, analyzed, and verified, consistent with the methodology espoused by Miles and Huberman as previously referenced.

How the Data Will Be Interpreted. Survey data from criterion groups in the four selected districts will be compared to data obtained through structured interviews and document analysis. All data will be interpreted after reduction, analysis, and verification as espoused by previously referenced Miles and Huberman as.

Subproblem four. How do election strategies compare with other non-strategic factors in deciding school bond election referenda?

The Data Needed

The data needed for the solving of subproblem four are (a) the responses of the four criterion groups to the survey instrument, (b) the record of responses from knowledgeable individuals, (c) documents relevant to the bond election in each district, and (d) an organizational framework and summary of non-strategic factors thought to affect bond referenda.

The Location of the Data

The identification data are located within the selected school districts. The responses of the criterion group in the four selected districts are located within that population. Election documents are located in the possession of the criterion group in each school district, in the school district offices, and at the offices of newspapers providing coverage for each of the districts. An organizational framework and summary of non-strategic factors affecting bond elections is contained within Piele and Hall's book, Budgets, Bonds, and Ballots (1973).

The Means of Obtaining the Data

Each of the four school districts that are selected will provide the researcher with written permission to conduct the study and release the data. Data will be obtained by reviewing documents including official school district documents and newspapers. Data from the criterion group in the four selected districts will be obtained through administration of the instrument to knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts. Qualitative data will be obtained through structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts.

The Treatment of the Data

How the Data Will Be Screened. The completed surveys of the criterion group in each of the four school districts will be screened to eliminate those where the respondent fails to meet the criteria for a knowledgeable individual. Data obtained through structured interviews will be screened on the same basis. Data from documents will be triangulated and analyzed for validity.

How the Item Analysis Will Be Made. The criterion group response data will be treated by performing an item analysis to determine an average score for each response measuring the perceived affect of non-strategic factors thought to affect the outcome of the election. Data from structured interviews and documents will be reduced, analyzed, and verified, consistent with the methodology espoused by Miles and Huberman as previously referenced.

How the Data Will Be Interpreted. Survey data from criterion groups in the four selected districts will be compared to data obtained through structured interviews and document analysis. All data will be interpreted after reduction, analysis, and verification as espoused by previously referenced Miles and Huberman.

Subproblem five. What critical incidents were present, and if so, what affect did they have on strategic and non-strategic factors and the outcome of the election?

The Data Needed

The data needed for the solving of subproblem five are (a) the responses of the four criterion groups to the survey instrument, (b) the record of responses from knowledgeable individuals, (c) documents relevant to the bond election in each district, and (d) an organizational framework and summary of critical incidents thought to affect strategic and non-strategic factors and the outcome of bond referenda.

The Location of the Data

The identification data are located within the selected school districts. The responses of the criterion group in the four selected districts are located within that population. Election documents are located in the possession of the criterion group in each school district, in the school district offices, and at the offices of newspapers providing coverage for each of the districts. An organizational framework and summary of critical incidents thought to affect bond referenda is contained within William Wood's dissertation (1990).

The Means of Obtaining the Data

Each of the four school districts that are selected will provide the researcher with written permission to conduct the study and release the data. Data will be obtained by reviewing documents including official school district documents and newspapers. Data from the criterion group in the four selected districts will be obtained through administration of the instrument to knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts. Qualitative data will be obtained through structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts.

The Treatment of the Data

How the Data Will Be Screened. The completed surveys of the criterion group in each of the four school districts will be screened to eliminate those where the respondent fails to meet the criteria for a knowledgeable individual. Data obtained through structured interviews will be screened on the same basis. Data from documents will be triangulated and analyzed for validity.

How the Item Analysis Will Be Made. The criterion group response data will be treated by performing an item analysis to determine an average score for each response measuring the presence and importance of critical incidents. Data from structured interviews and documents will be reduced, analyzed, and verified, consistent with the methodology espoused by Miles and Huberman as previously referenced.

How the Data Will Be Interpreted. Survey data from criterion groups in the four selected districts will be compared to data obtained through structured interviews and document analysis. All data will be interpreted after reduction, analysis, and verification as espoused by previously referenced Miles and Huberman.

Subproblem six. How did the leadership role of the superintendent affect the selection of election strategies and the management of non-strategic factors and critical incidents?

The Data Needed

The data needed for the solving of subproblem six are (a) the name of the school district superintendent who was involved in the planning and organization of the election, (b) the responses of the four criterion groups to a survey instrument measuring the frequency of use of various election strategies, (c) the record of responses from interviews of knowledgeable individuals, and (d) documents relevant to the bond election in each district. Election documents are located in the school district offices and at the offices of newspapers providing coverage for each of the districts.

The Location of the Data

The identification data are located within the selected school district. The responses of the criterion group in the four selected districts are located within that population.

The Means of Obtaining the Data

Each of the four school districts that are selected will provide the researcher with written permission to conduct the study and release the data. Data will be obtained by reviewing documents including official school district documents and newspapers. Data from the criterion group in the four selected districts will be obtained through administration of the survey instrument to knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts. Qualitative data will be obtained through structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals identified in each of the districts.

The Treatment of the Data

How the Data Will Be Screened. The completed surveys of the criterion group in each of the four school districts will be screened to eliminate those where the respondent fails to meet the criteria for a knowledgeable individual. Data obtained through structured interviews will be screened on the same basis. Data from documents will be triangulated and analyzed for validity.

How the Item Analysis Will Be Made. The criterion response data will be treated by performing an item analysis to determine an average score for each response measuring the frequency of use of various election strategies. Data from structured interviews and documents will be reduced, analyzed, and verified, consistent with the methodology espoused by Miles and Huberman as previously referenced.

How the Data Will Be Interpreted. Survey data from criterion groups in the four selected districts will be compared to data obtained through structured interviews and document analysis. All data will be interpreted after reduction, analysis, and verification as espoused by Miles and Huberman as previously referenced. The leadership role and behaviors of the superintendent will by interpreted within the leadership dimensions outlined by Bolman and Deal (1991).

Instrumentation

A semistructured interview guide was constructed to provide a framework for the collection and organization of the data. This type of interview guide provided the researcher with a sequence of open and close-ended questions that were asked all off respondents. At the same time, the interviewer had the discretion to follow up on probing questions and deviate from the schedule to maximize the quality and richness of the responses. Some of the questions in the interview guide were adapted from the work of Halverson (1984), Henderson (1986), and Bolman and Deal (1991).

The study also collected and analyzed data obtained from a survey questionnaire. This questionnaire focused on the use or nonuse of election strategies and their perceived importance to the outcome of the election. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize data obtained from the survey. These data were compared to those obtained from interviews and other data collection techniques. The contents of the survey were adapted from the work of Boyle (1984) and Mancini (1987).

The interview guide and survey were initially field tested and revised based upon input from a school district not part of the study. Both instruments were tested and revised again in a second district. Piloting the instruments provided an opportunity to test the hypotheses, check the statistical techniques used in the study, get feedback from respondents, and improve the effectiveness of the instruments before beginning the study (Borg & Gall, 1983).

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed to allow for precise evaluation after the interview and diminish the disadvantage of trying to simultaneously ask questions, listen to responses, and record answers.

Bias and Error

Recognizing and preventing bias and error were of critical importance to the study. In the absence of safeguards, bias and error can contaminate the research and skew data collection, reduction, display, and conclusion-drawing and verification. One way to minimize bias and error is through the use multiple methods of data collection and triangulation that were employed in this study. The second way to achieve reliable results is to understand, recognize, and minimize the type of bias and error inherent in the research.

Researcher bias begins with the conceptual framework itself and is expanded to include "...the analyst's opinions, attitudes, beliefs, values, motivations, expectations, and prejudices....These factors can lead to...distortions and omissions" (Murphey, 1980, p. 59). A careful study of qualitative research methodology, and in particular interview techniques, prepared the researcher to collect and analyze data in a competent manner, minimize bias and error, and formulate valid conclusions.

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY ONE: ALBERTVILLE

Setting

Although the school district takes its name from the city of Albertville, the area actually includes all or parts of seven municipalities. These suburban communities are located on or near a large lake within thirty to forty-five minutes of the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The seven communities were starkly heterogeneous in 1993 and ranged from affluent to modest areas. Some of the cities are split between two or more school districts. A large lake is prominent in Albertville's setting and many of the recreational activities relate to water sports and other opportunities in an abundant number of surrounding parks. A modest array of businesses provides for some of the community's needs. Shoppers are also drawn to a large suburban mall within about twenty minutes of Albertville.

Approximately 17,069 people lived within the borders of the school district at the time of the bond election study. There is a small town feel and the area is largely residential. As a third ring suburb in "lake country," there are many attractive residential areas. Much of this residential and commercial property is of high value resulting in Albertville's substantially higher than average property value per pupil. The school district includes a significant number of residents who have been living in the area for a long time as well as many new and younger families who have moved in recently. Some of the respondents described the underlying tension present when development began to change the nature of the community. At the time of the election, senior citizens comprised about 10% of the population which was slightly less than the average of 10.4% within the metropolitan area.

The Albertville Public Schools was substantially smaller than average within the metropolitan area and as compared to neighboring school districts in 1993. Four schools housed 2,401 students in kindergarten through grade twelve at the time of the bond election. Two primary buildings contained kindergarten through grade four. The remainder of the student body attended a middle school for grades five through seven and Albertville High School. Albertville also had a district center which housed a variety of school programs in addition to a senior citizens center. Some city offices were also located in the building. The number of professional and classified staff totaled 277.24 full-time equivalencies which placed Albertville's professional staff to pupil ratio about seven-tenths higher than the state average in at the time of the election (MDE, "School District Profiles," 1993).

School-age children were present in approximately one-third of the district's households during the 1992-93 school year. Elementary enrollments (K-6) were 269 higher than the number of secondary students reinforcing what district officials characterized as a relatively stable enrollment pattern with modest growth. From a racial point of view, the student body was homogeneous with minorities comprising slightly under 4% of the population. Three private schools were located within the school district serving 269 Albertville students (MDE, "School District Profiles," 1993).

The school district received substantially more revenue from local property taxes as compared to state sources which reinforced a profile of relatively higher wealth per pupil than the average in the state. The district's financial position was fairly poor in 1993 as measured by operating fund balances. Total operating expenditures per pupil were higher than both the state and regional averages, but less than the average of what other school districts spent within the county (MDE, "School District Profiles," 1993).

In 1993 the Albertville Public Schools was governed by seven board members composed of five men and two women. It was a relatively young board at that time with an average service length of just over three years. Three of the board members had served two years or less at the time of the election. The superintendent's tenure of six years in Albertville was longer than the most senior member of the school board. He brought a wealth of experience to the position with twenty-five years in the superintendency in other districts.

Only one previous school finance election had been conducted in the five years before the 1993 bond election. The district passed an operating levy in 1989 by a substantial margin of 2486 to 914. The last bond election which passed in 1971 resulted in the construction of a new high school. Similar to the experience of other districts, one of the challenges presented by the 1993 bond election was the community's perception of the "new" high school even though it was twenty-three years old in 1993.

Pre-election Survey

The Albertville school board contracted with a professional polling firm and conducted a community survey in the summer before the November 1993 bond election. Four-hundred randomly selected adults were asked a variety of questions about the school district. The overall approval rating found that 62% of the respondents rated the quality of education in Albertville as good or excellent while 22% believed it was fair or poor. Residents cited the overall quality, teachers, programs, and district size as things they liked best about Albertville. Factors they liked the least included the administration and declining quality of the district. Respondents believed that lack of funds and maintaining educational quality were the most serious issues facing the school district.

Several questions focused on the job ratings of the school board, superintendent, and teaching staff. Residents of the district gave a negative rating to the Albertville school board. Thirty-seven percent of the community ranked the board as excellent or good compared to 46% who disapproved of the school board. Detractors were concerned about prior policies including a controversial censorship issue, fiscal controls, and communications. The approval rating of the superintendent was evenly split between those who gave him excellent and good ratings as compared to fair or poor.

Teachers fared very well with a five to one ratio of favorable as compared to unfavorable ratings.

Residents responded to a number of questions related to a potential bond election. Reactions to a specific proposal of fifteen million dollars drew support from 57% and opposition from 37% of the respondents. The number of strong supporters compared to all opposition, however, resulted in a deficit of 18% at the time of the survey. The polling firm described the need for "...substantial pre-campaign communications...to set the groundwork for any referendum effort" (Morris, 1993).

Overall, the residents of the Albertville school district were moderately satisfied with their schools. Fallout from the board's handling of the book censorship issue and perceived problems with fiscal credibility resulted in a fairly negative attitude toward the school board. This perception appeared to carry over to the superintendent as well with both rated below average as compared to other school surveys within the state. The researcher noted the need for a positive approach, good communications, and a united school board leading into the election campaign (Morris, 1993).

Sponsorship of the Election

The bond election in Albertville was preceded by significant pre-election planning. The district had engaged in a strategic planning initiative about fourteen months before the election date. Albertville's Educational Quality Committee (AEQC) was charged with looking at a broad range of district needs to help the school board and administration chart a course for the next several years. A member of the school board made a point of emphasizing the importance of this phase: "I want to clarify that the preparation [for the election] actually goes back a couple years as compared to the actual campaign."

The AEQC divided citizens and staff into a number of committees depending upon the interests of the participants. One of these committees concentrated on facilities. A member of the professional staff summarized the purpose of the committee as bringing together "...school board members, teachers, and citizens who all wanted...to make changes in our buildings." She identified a variety of needs within the district with particular emphasis on science rooms, media centers, and technology. At the recommendation of the committee, an architect was hired and a facility analysis was completed. This study identified space, health and safety, and other improvements needed by the district. In the words of the superintendent, the recommendations of this committee and the pre-election survey combined to give the board the "ammunition they needed" to move forward on a 1993 bond election.

The school board unanimously passed a resolution sponsoring the bond election on July 12, 1993, approximately fifteen weeks before the November 2 election date. Although the vote was unanimous, the superintendent was concerned at that time how the board would hang together during the campaign. "Two of them had been elected and seated on the board as of July which was the board meeting that I think we actually proposed and passed the resolution to vote for the bond issue," he said. "There were still some unknown quantities and then there was the other faction who was against everything."

The superintendent had reason to be concerned about the school board members and their collective impact on the outcome of the election. One board member broke ranks shortly after the initial vote and publicly opposed the election. Most respondents characterized the school board as split six to one, but two informants thought is was five to two. Representatives from the administration and staff, school board, teaching staff, and community rated the overall credibility of the board as relatively weak. Overall, respondents rated the board below average on a scale of one to five. One of the tri-chairs of the citizens' campaign described the board as "...mixed and controversial. I am going to be generous, she said, and put it at a three because there were mitigating things that were gong on."

These mitigating circumstances were complex and difficult. A book banning initiative during the school year before the election contributed to a divided and mildly hostile climate. As an outgrowth of this issue, a representative of the teaching staff reported that teachers "...took a vote of no confidence in four school board members so we were at odds with the board. There were three that were supportive and just did a terrific job and there were four that, well, we even had the Civil Liberties Union out here and one of them finally changed his vote....All of this is still kind of happening to see how this all shakes out."

It was also clear that there was a good deal of support for the board in the community. One tri-chair pointed out that "...you never hear from citizens who...knew education was wonderful and thought you were doing a good job. There was a very vocal minority here and that vocal minority could really set off a lot of controversy." One board member summed it up this way: "It probably varied all over the place and [the board's credibility] might have ranged from two to four. It definitely leaned towards real concern and lack of confidence at some points and probably swung back the other way later." Despite the lack of unanimity, most of the board members clearly supported the initiative and contributed to its success. Overall, the credibility of the school board was not an asset going into the campaign.

The bonding proposal itself totaled $14,700,000 and was placed on the ballot in one question. The district's published "Facts and Figures" summarized how the money would be used. About 46% of the bond proceeds were proposed for classroom additions and technology. The remaining 54% was targeted for building maintenance and repairs. All schools within the district were to be expanded or remodeled with an emphasis on updating media centers and computer labs. Safety and accessibility improvements were also emphasized.

The bonding proposal was influenced by the pre-election survey in terms of both scope and contents. The board significantly trimmed the $25,000,000 of recommended improvements and limited the bonding request to only the top priority needs. This brought the property tax impact on the average home down to approximately

$106 per year, close to what the survey suggested was possible to pass. "We also picked up some other strategies [from the survey] in terms of types of improvements," said one of the tri-chairs. "Media centers were shown to be a very important thing and a very sellable item. Technology was sellable, safety was sellable, as well as capital improvements responding to the deteriorated state and age of our buildings."

The bond election was conducted on Tuesday, November 2, which was the general election day. The selection of the election date was primarily driven by time. November 2 was the soonest that the district could get the information together and organize a campaign. The November date also made it possible to complete construction documents, bidding procedures, and finish a good deal of the work before September of 1994. Since 1993 was an odd election year, there were not state or national issues prompting a higher election turnout or influencing the composition of the citizens coming to the polls. Only one of the cities within the school district was conducting an election on the same date so a significant number of voters were not being drawn to the polls for issues other than the proposed bonding.

Campaign Planning and Organization

One of the most important advantages in Albertville, in relationship to planning and organization, was the work that preceded the actual campaign. As described earlier in this case study, the Albertville Educational Quality Committee had been organized about eighteen months before the election to develop a vision for the future of the school district. One of these committees concentrated on facilities and established a foundation for moving forward within a bonding proposal in 1993. One of the key volunteer leaders had been involved with the AEQC and moved naturally from that to the "Yes For Kids" committee supporting the bond election. Many other volunteers were drafted from AEQC and were drawn to the bond election effort with significant commitment and information.

The administration combined its own knowledge of the community with advise from the polling firm in establishing tri-chairs for the campaign. According to one the tri-chairs, "The superintendent worked very closely with the polling firm to pick the tri-chairs. I think the mix of the tri-chairs we had on the 'Yes for Kids' Committee was very important." Many individuals involved with the election pointed to the quality of the tri-chairs as a significant variable. It was evident that the school district leveraged this leadership to its greatest advantage. One staff member referred to them as "the triumvirate."

All three tri-chairs had parallel responsibility, but fulfilled different roles. One of the leaders was the organizer, taskmaster, and steward of the campaign. In his own words, he was also the "mouthpiece" of the committee in the media, in presentations, and ran the committee meetings. A school board member characterized his leadership as follows: "In order to lead something, you have to care about it. You just have to because it takes so much time. He was willing to stand up and speak for what he believed in." A second leader was a long-time community activist and experienced political strategist. She was described by one of the other tri-chairs as "...legendary in her political activism out here and well known and well respected by everybody." She focused her efforts on the politics of the campaign, canvassing, and getting out the vote. A third leader was the treasurer and concentrated mostly on fundraising to finance the committee's activities.

The school district solicited volunteers for the "Yes For Kids" committee through letters to selected individuals, an advertisement in the local newspaper, and by contacting people directly. At an initial meeting, the specifics of the bond proposal were reviewed and individuals broke into preliminary committees depending upon their interests. On the basis of advice from the polling firm and in cooperation with school staff, the tri-chairs eventually set up committees for public relations, communications, finance, canvassing, and "get out the vote" efforts. Each of these committees had a chairperson who met regularly with the tri-chairs and superintendent. About thirty to forty volunteers were directly involved working on one of the committees. A majority of committee members were parents with a substantial complement of administrators, teachers, and other staff members. Teachers played a very important role during the canvassing phase of the campaign and were prominent on the telephones.

Role of the School Board

The role of the school board was definitely behind the scenes. On the basis of comments from respondents, this approach was intentional and was guided by two perspectives. First, the leadership of the committee recognized that the overall credibility of the school board was not an asset. The split board, smoldering remnants of the book banning issue, and concern about financial credibility created a climate that did not encourage the school board to be out in front of the campaign. Second, both the tri-chairs and the school board had a mutual sense of the proper role of each organization. "I always told them they were to give us information," said one tri-chair. "Be very careful not to sell anything--we will sell it for you." The fuzzy recollection of how the board was involved, described by several respondents, reinforced the conclusion that the board's role was behind the scenes. On an individual basis, this involvement ranged from significant time and effort supporting campaign efforts to overt actions in opposition to the election.

Role of the Superintendent

The superintendent's leadership was also exercised behind the scenes. One of the tri-chairs summarized it this way: "I thought he did a totally appropriate role. Totally appropriate. He was behind the scenes--he was not on the front lines. We were up front." Other respondents confirmed this characterization and described the unobtrusive role of providing information and supporting the committee. One board member emphasized the earlier role of the superintendent as critically important. "He worked very hard with the architects to put out a schedule and start involving people. At the start we had a small group, but he added a few more staff and a few more parents till we finally got this 'Yes For Kids' committee." A committee member acknowledged that the superintendent's role was vitally important commenting that "[h]e was the most important person in the whole thing." She then went on to add, "I'm sure he did some things, but I do no know exactly what they were." The contrast in these comments, along with testimony from other individuals, confirmed an important, but low key role of the superintendent.

Individuals critical of the bonding proposal and the district's leadership viewed the superintendent's role quite differently. "Well, I would say he was the prime mover," said the dissenting school board member. "I think he really spearheaded this thing from the very beginning. He played a crucial role. Superintendents are important." A community member, also involved in efforts to defeat the bond election expressed similar views. "His involvement was obvious--very obvious. If he hadn't been pushing it so hard the rest of the board wouldn't have pushed it so hard. I don't think we would have even had an election if it wasn't for him." The leadership of the committee and superintendent recognized this antagonism from what they characterized as a vocal minority. This did have some influence on the superintendent's leadership role. In summary, it appeared that he provided solid leadership and got the most out of a rather difficult situation. The committee and superintendent had a good understanding of how he could contribute most effectively in the campaign.

Role of Staff

Albertville's staff had a moderate level of involvement in the overall campaign, but were used extensively in the canvassing. This approach was consistent with the survey results which indicated a high regard for teachers within the community. Principals recruited citizen volunteers at the building level and coordinated election activities that needed organization by building. One of the administrative staff chaired the communications committee that was about one-half staff and the balance citizens. A prominent leader from the Albertville Education Association was very involved in communications and served as a conduit between the committee and teachers. "I know that quite a few of them [teachers] did volunteer some of their time to be on some of the committees," she said. "They might have made up a fourth or a third and the rest of the volunteers that I can think of were citizens that were volunteering their time to be there and support it." One of the other tri-chairs estimated about an even mix between citizens and staff among the sixty to seventy individuals actively involved in the campaign.

Teachers also participated in the "get out the vote" reminder calls made just before the election day and were asked, on a voluntary basis, to call the parents of their students as part of the campaign. Although some concern was expressed about the perception of conflict on interest, the "Yes for Kids" leadership did believe that this strategy was successful. Teachers made a scripted call to generally get a sense of where parents were coming from and what questions that they might have. "You know I am a teacher," said one volunteer. "I could speak to what is good for third graders and what we needed on kind of a personal level." One tri-chair estimated that about 70% of the teachers participated. The number of parents objecting to the calls was very minimal.

Election Outcome

The election day arrived on Tuesday, November 2, 1993. The question passed by a margin of only twenty-two votes with 1,423 voting affirmatively and 1,401 voting "no". District officials estimated voter turnout at about 24% which was comparable to other recent elections of a similar type in their district and did not appear to be a significant factor in the outcome of the election.

Factors Affecting the Outcome of the Election

In the third chapter of this study, literature relevant to this study was summarized. This included non-strategic and strategic factors thought to affect the outcome of bond elections and a closer look at any critical events and the leadership role of the superintendent. In this section of the study, these same factors are revisited from the perspective of knowledgeables and survey responses.

Non-strategic Factors

A non-strategic factor is a contextual variable that affects the outcome of school bond referenda. Philip Piele categorizes these variables as environmental, socioeconomic, and psychological factors. The economic context of Albertville was above average in both wealth and education level of its residents. Similar to other third ring suburbs, Albertville had a fairly significant number of young professional families commuting into the metropolitan area. The survey conducted before the election found that over half of the residents came from up-scale, white collar households. The median household income at that time was $50,500 annually. Forty-four percent of the respondents reported that they had finished college or attended graduate school. This community profile was generally an asset going into the election campaign (Morris, 1993).

Interestingly, the asset described above was locked within a context that somewhat diminished wealth and education as a benefit to the bond election. To some extent Albertville suffered from an inferiority complex as they compared themselves to larger and more affluent neighbors. According to the superintendent, "This gets a little bit to the question of perception: how does the community perceive the schools?" Another administrator put it this way: "We are also a district, [compared to other areas on the lake], with a lot of diversity as far as education level and financial means. There are some six million dollar homes and there are some real shacks that people are living in as a primary residence." All but one respondent used the word diversity in describing the nature of the community. This characteristic was expressed not only in terms of income, but also in how it manifested itself in different expectations for facilities and programs.

One of the tri-chairs likened the community context similar to that of an identity crisis. "My own perception," he said, "is [that of] a community with a chip on its shoulders. Albertville has identified itself or viewed itself as the poor stepchild....We are surrounded by [more affluent communities] and a lot of people do not think we measure up." The superintendent explained the importance of this is psychological terms. Citizens working for the 1993 bond election had to convince the community they deserved the improvements as much as proving that the investment in facilities was needed. This had implications for how residents responded to the level of proposed bonding and the tax implications.

The Albertville School Board adopted a proposed preliminary tax levy in September of 1993. The total levy of $10,117,526 was approximately 10.5% higher than the year before and did not include the levy for the bond election that eventually passed in November or the city and county levies. Although the double-digit increase for the school district's levy exceeded inflation, the superintendent did not feel the proposed levy was a negative to the campaign.

Respondents were also asked to characterize the importance of the bonding proposal's cost and the related tax implications. There was strong consensus that the amount of the bonding request and the corresponding taxes were very important. There was also agreement that the cost to the individual taxpayer was more important than the bonding amount. According to one board member, "Actually it is not the amount [of the bond] that in my opinion is most important....A human being has a very difficult time relating to 15 million or even 73 million. What they can relate to is what it is going to cost them personally."

The Albertville School Board had considered bonding requests up to twenty-three million. On the basis of survey data estimating willingness to pay, the district wisely pulled the proposal back to a level that gave it a reasonable chance to be successful. Given the closeness of the election, this was an important factor.

The election context was also defined by the history of school elections within the district. Although the district had passed an operating levy in 1989, it had taken three attempts. It had been over twenty years since the last bond election. Historically, it had not been unusual for it to take more than one try to be successful and some residents expressed surprise that this bond election passed without having to come back a second time. The superintendent noted that the 1993 bond election campaign got off to a more positive start. "The indications of support were there...and it was a different climate. [In the past],...the opposition was right out there on the front line blasting away and they didn't do that in this one." Organized opposition did surface and run a late negative campaign. From the superintendent's perspective, given the closeness of the outcome, the district was fortunate that the opposition did not start earlier.

Respondents were asked to expand on the unique nature of Albertville and describe characteristics that might have affected the outcome of the election. In addition to the diversity already discussed, three issues surfaced with some frequency. The first community characteristic was that of a small town. Even while recognizing the community's growth and change, residents still talked about that small town feeling: "The unique thing about our community is we are a small town, and we have all the good points and also all of the bad points of a small town. Which means that people...remember its entire history and...they vote based upon that accumulated knowledge of the area." Word of mouth was the second most important source on information behind a local weekly paper that was distributed to everyone at no cost. Both of these information sources were reminiscent of small town life (Morris, 1993).

The second community characteristic that people talked about was the generally conservative nature of the community and the activity of the religious right. "We have a fairly strong segment of people that I think are fairly categorized as the religious right," said one individual. "I hate to put labels on people, but I think they identified themselves in that way. This is a more conservative community than most places in Minnesota. The Republican Party does very well out here." As characterized by a volunteer, this conservatism was significant in the bond election campaign because "...some people thought that we should not try to measure up [to surrounding communities]." As one of the tri-chairs summed up, "[The district] is prone to controversy and heated debate. Nothing happens easy out here."

The third unique characteristic mentioned about Albertville was perceptions about the senior citizen population. Although the statistics did not indicate an unusually large senior population, it came up in several of the interviews. One respondent talked about the large population of senior citizens. Another referenced an unusually large number of nursing homes. Others described the importance of the senior citizen center which was maintained by Albertville in the district office building. The superintendent described it this way: "Our senior center is housed in the school building and...they're thought of as being a part of the family of the school; therefore, that [negative] demographic of a higher aged population is offset with their involvement."

Some damage control with seniors was necessary following the community survey because of some confusion with one of the questions dealing with the district office building. Some seniors understood the question to mean that they would lose their space. The district wisely wasted no time straightening out that misunderstanding and soliciting their support to make sure that senior citizens would continue to have space within the facility.

Respondents were asked to evaluate the impact of media on the bond election campaign. Albertville's community weekly newspaper commonly was the first thing mentioned, although this medium was not thought to have played a big part in the outcome of the election. The community survey did, however, identify the community newspaper as the primary source of information for district residents. Forty-one percent of those surveyed listed it as their most important information source (Morris, 1993). The coverage appeared to be fairly objective and balanced. The superintendent characterized the reporting as "...very factual in representing the district's reasons for the bond issue." The newspaper did not take an editorial position on the bond issue (Morris, 1993).

The referendum committee sought to influence the newspaper's impact by soliciting letters to the editor in support of the election. One of the tri-chairs explained it this way: "With these letters to the editor we attempted to cover negative letters at least two to one with positive letters [to give] the perception that things were positive. People might not read the information too thoroughly but they do keep tabs on which direction [public opinion] is going." According to one of the teachers, "Everybody reads it from cover to cover starting with the letters to the editor." Among the negative letters to the editor was one from a current board member in the last week of the campaign urging a "no" vote. Up until the last issue of the weekly paper, media coverage had not been considered a critical variable.

The presence of organized opposition in bond election campaigns is recognized as a powerful variable influencing the outcome of the election. The formation of organized opposition often goes hand-in-hand with split boards. Respondents in the Albertville study were asked whether or not organized opposition was present in the 1993 election and the nature of the group's objections. In the case of this election, lack of trust was one of the frequently used labels to describe the late push by the opposition. The censorship issue and the perceived responsibility for the district's financial problems also were root causes of the opposition. Interestingly, a variety of individuals supporting the election acknowledged the activity of the opposition, but those actually involved tended to downplay the impact of their actions.

The lack of trust expressed by some opponents started at the top as described by a member of the school board. She explained how her perspective and role in the election changed from the time the board passed an unanimous resolution to sponsor the bond election to eventually opposing its passage. "Well, I'm a school board member and initially my belief was that there were things that needed to be done in our district. [Then] I took a second look and realized that I did not have real confidence in the way that our bidding process was going and in the management of our school district. I thought it didn't make sense to pass a bond issue for people that you don't have a lot of confidence in." Her role expanded to providing information to individuals opposing the election as well as authoring the previously referenced letter to the editor urging a "no" vote.

The superintendent characterized the organized opposition as late and not very well organized. He also pointed to the dissenting board member as encouraging this late response. "She brought up issues like we spent so much on a roof at a school two years ago so why are we doing a new one now? You know the doubt raising things that attempt to discredit the administration....It's the sound fiscal management and trust thing." One of the tri-chairs described the opposition this way: "They are the designated "nay sayers," I would guess. Not necessarily organized but there is a core group of people out here who are generally opposed to anything that the administration or the school board wants. I think it was probably a half a dozen people acting independently and not particularly aggressively." The dissenting board member downplayed the impact of the opposition: "There wasn't an organized campaign to kill it or anything like that," she said.

Organized or not, the most damaging action by Albertville Committee for Realistic Goals came in the last week of the bond election campaign. The group circulated a "vote no" flyer in some church parking lots and door-to-door on the Sunday before the Tuesday election. The lead article on the single page flyer emphasized a roofing issue referenced earlier in this study: "Another Roof At Shirley Hills [Elementary]?" The article claimed that the building had already been re-roofed and now the administration wanted to raise taxes through a bond to do it again. Other articles repeated familiar themes suggesting waste, dishonesty, and mismanagement. The flyer included many inaccuracies damaging to the campaign. The opposition group also waged a limited telephone campaign to urge a "no" vote.

The superintendent responded to the negative flyer with a letter to all parents sent home with students the following Monday. In a section titled, BE NOT DISSUADED, he retorted: "At the last minute, a desperate attempt is being made by a few people to side track the realization of these plans. Someone calling themselves 'The Albertville Committee for Realistic Goals' would have us believe that what is being proposed is unnecessary and our students don't deserve the very best we can provide. I would like to correct that misinformation." His letter went on to clarify issues raised in the negative flyer and urged support for the election: "This bond issue proposal is the result of efforts of many concerned citizens like yourself. Your vote tomorrow is essential to make our vision a reality. Our Albertville school children from the class of 1994 to the class of 2014 are counting on us."

In summary, the election context was unusually complex and interesting. The education and income level of the community suggested an ideal profile for a relatively easy election. There were other factors, however, that made for a more challenging election and close vote. Albertville's economic diversity and the presence of a strong religious conservative group spawned conflict and distrust. One school board member also fueled discontent by feeding critics of the bond election with incomplete or inaccurate information. The election campaign also was encumbered with past controversies focused on financial problems and a book banning initiative. These factors, in combination, resulted in a relatively weak level of confidence in the school board and administration entering the election campaign.

Strategic Factors

For the purposes of this study, a strategic factor is defined as one element of the set of various methods selected and designed to form a plan to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. In evaluating this case study, it is important to understand to what extent Albertville used research-based strategies and which of these strategies were believed to be most important in the outcome of the election. Thirty-eight strategic factors were identified in the literature and presented to knowledgeable respondents in the form of a survey. Individuals close to the study were first asked to identify which of these strategies were used and the relative importance of each in the 1993 bond election.

Thirty-one out of thirty-eight (82%) of the election strategies were used in the Albertville campaign. Strategies not used in the campaign included the following:

1. Conducted a formal or informal analysis to identify influentials within the community
2. Students in the school district were actively involved in the campaign
3. Made a conscious decision to set the date of the election for a specific week or month in order to gain an edge in the campaign
4. Demonstrated responsiveness to the opposition, diffused their platform, gained their support by modifying the referendum, and incorporated their ideas
5. Identified and provided transportation to potential voters who required transportation to the polls
6. Secured city council(s) endorsement for the bond election
7. Campaign organized activities by elementary attendance areas

Respondents also rated the relative importance of the thirty-eight strategies by completing a survey and listing what they believed to be the most important strategies affecting the outcome of this election. A five point Likert scale was used ranging from "essential" (5) to "not important" (1). Ratings from individuals were averaged using arithmetic means to rank each strategy from most important to the outcome of Albertville's 1993 bond election to least important. The following nine strategies obtained an average score of at least 4.5 on a 5.0 scale:

1. Establish a citizen committee to involve the public in organizing and implementing election activities (5.0)
2. Used "Get Out The Vote" reminder calls to all identified supporters (5.0)
3. Identified probable "yes" voter (4.875)
4. Focused the electorate's attention on the benefits which accrue to students from the proposed improvements (4.5)
5. Used more than one media to convey the referendum message (4.5)
6. Encouraged citizen participation in the school district by giving citizens the opportunity to become involved (4.5)
7. Conducted a district-wide program of public relations about the school district throughout the year (4.5)
8. Involved the certified staff of the school district in the campaign (4.5)
9. Obtained a bond election endorsement from the

local teacher union affiliate (4.5)

Individuals involved in the campaign also responded to two open-ended questions related to election strategies. The first question asked them to identify the five most important strategies contained in the survey instrument. Four of the thirty-eight election strategies were identified as most important by at least half of the individuals completing the survey:

1. Used "Get Out The Vote" reminder calls to all identified supporters (7 out of 8)
2. Established a citizen committee to involve the public in organizing and implementing election activities (5 out of 8)
3. Identified probable "yes" voter (5 out of 8)
4. Used a formal or informal survey/poll to gather data on the citizens' feelings towards the proposal prior to the election (4 out of 8)

It is interesting to note that the open-ended questions yielded similar results to the written survey with the same two strategies identified as most important in this election campaign. The formal or informal survey identified as one of the five most important strategies in the open-ended responses was rated 4.25 on the survey. Although it was not among those rated at 4.5 or above, it was one of the top sixteen of the thirty-eight identified strategies.

Individuals involved with the campaign were also asked to identify strategies that they thought were important in the outcome of the election that were not included in the list of thirty-eight in the survey. The following five strategies were identified by at least one person:

1. Encouraged the use of absentee ballots from likely "yes" voters (college students)
2. Properly identified what roles and what degree of visibility were appropriate for the superintendent, school board, staff, and citizen committee
3. Involved all employees (professional and support staff) in the campaign
4. Set up information "hot line" for people to call in their questions for responses
5. Involved citizens and staff in defining the items to be included in the bond referendum not just in selling one which was already defined
6. Involved teachers in making calls to parents of their students in the last week

Overall, Albertville approached the election in a strategic fashion. Eighty-two percent of the identified strategies were used in the planning and campaign. Particular strengths were the citizen involvement on the AEOC before the election, use of a survey to determine the amount and contents of the bonding proposal, and execution of recommendations from the campaign consultant in organizing and conducting the election campaign. The emphasis on canvassing to identify probable "yes" voters and reminder calls to vote were also consistent with the research on successful elections. The volunteer committee called all 11,000 registered voters in the weeks before the election which was a strength of the campaign. Many of the studies cited in Chapter Two concluded that school finance elections held in conjunction with other state or national elections are less likely to be successful if those elections result in a larger than normal turnout. In this situation, however, only one of the municipalities within the school district was conducting an election on the general election date so it was not believed to affect the outcome.

Critical Incidents

A critical incident is an unplanned, unexpected event occurring within a relatively close period before the vote that affects the use of strategic factors, non-strategic factors, and the outcome of the election. Individuals involved in the campaign were asked to consider whether any such incidents occurred and, if so, what effect they had on the use of strategies and the outcome of the election.

Individuals involved with the election campaign identified two critical incidents that affected both the strategies used late in the campaign and the outcome of the election. On the Sunday before the Tuesday election, a late initiative by a "vote no" group resulted in a flyer distributed in church parking lots and door-to-door in parts of the school district. The one page flyer encouraged residents to "Vote With Your Heart And Your Head." The flyer suggested that the school board and administration were wasteful and incompetent and asserted that if the election was defeated, the residents would have an opportunity to vote on a less expensive option at a later date. The flyer was signed by The Albertville Committee for Realistic Goals but did not identify any individual's name or address. This flyer was considered a critical incident because it was unexpected and came too late to refute in the media or with broad-based communication. The school district and campaign committee had only the Monday before election day to identify a strategy and respond. The superintendent made a decision to compose a letter refuting the flyer and to send it home with students on the Monday before the election. The information and tone of the letter were bold and direct. Given the narrow margin of victory, it is likely that this critical incident could have resulted in defeat without the superintendent's quick response. It could also be the case that the election might have been lost if the distribution of the negative flyer was better organized and more broadly distributed.

A second critical incident was also considered to be important, but did not provide the same opportunity to respond. In the last issue of the weekly newspaper published before the election, one of the school board members wrote a negative letter stating her reasons for opposing the election and urging others to vote "no". Since this was printed the day before the election, there was no opportunity to write and publish a retort in the weekly newspaper. One could only surmise that this letter was damaging to the campaign and might have, in combination with the flyer, brought the election closer than it would have been otherwise. One of the outgrowths of the election was a decision by the newspaper to no longer print letters to the editor in the week before election day.

Leadership Style and Role of Superintendent

The leadership style and role of the superintendent is one of the important research questions focused on in this study. In addition to open-ended questions investigating this variable, respondents were also asked to label the superintendent's predominant leadership style using a conceptual model developed by Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal. This model was summarized in the literature review and describes leadership behavior in four categories. Individuals closely involved with the bond election were asked to identify which of the four descriptions best described the leadership role of their superintendent in the 1993 bond election.

Four out of eight respondents selected Human Resource as the predominant leadership characteristic of the superintendent. This dimension of leadership focuses on empowering people and training and development. There is an emphasis on involving people and a focus on feelings and needs, participation, communication, and relationships. None of the other four leadership categories was mentioned by more than two people. Albertville's superintendent vacillated between selecting Political and Human Resource as his predominant style, and then settled on Political.

Individuals were also asked to name the leadership category least like the superintendent. The response was split between Structural and Political. The two individuals who opposed the election identified Political as the predominant leadership style of the superintendent. It was evident from their explanatory remarks that they both attached negative connotations to this label.

A set of three questions explored the importance and role of the superintendent in the bond election. The first question asked respondents to describe how important it is during a bond election for the superintendent to have a positive relationship with the school board, staff, and community. A follow-up inquiry asked individuals to describe and evaluate those relationships in Albertville at the time of the election. Another interview question investigated how important the superintendent's role was in relationship to the outcome of the election.

Everyone involved in the campaign identified positive relationships between the superintendent and others as very important. The interview question focused particularly on relationships with the school board, staff, and community. Typical comments included such descriptors as "extremely important," "very important," and of "paramount importance." According to one of the school board members, "I don't think there is any way that you are going to pass one [a bond election] without a relatively high level of trust between all the parties involved." One of the administrative staff summed it up in this way: "Good relationships are extremely important. He is the educational leader of our community."

Respondents consistently characterized the relationship between the superintendent and staff as strong. A member of the teaching staff commented that "...the superintendent had emerged as a strong leader. A school board member noted that the administration and staff united as a result of the book banning controversy and emerged stronger leading into the bond election campaign. Another board member rated the relationship with staff at an all-time high.

The superintendent's relationship with the school board was also rated fairly high. He was generally well respected by the board and they worked together effectively for the most part. This positive assessment is qualified by two variables. First, the fallout from the book banning issue was still evident with wounds not yet healed. Second, one of the six board members had a very poor relationship with the superintendent and was consistently at odds with him and the rest of the board. This board member was a lightning rod and conduit for a variety of discontented residents within the community. From the point of view of this board member, the rest of the board was a rubber stamp for the superintendent. "His role was to say when to jump and how high." According to her, "Our superintendent has been given total power by the present board and they totally supported him unquestionably."

Descriptions of the relationship between the superintendent and community were more mixed and did influence the election strategy. One of the board members reflected back to the censorship problem and said, "Again, we tend to have a little bit of a division as a result of some things that occurred...which raised a lot of questions in our mind whether we stood a chance at passing such a referendum." The same question was raised with the tri-chairs of the election committee as they developed the campaign plan. One of the tri-chairs said, "Although the superintendent was extremely supportive in his own circle, we did not think that he would be a good flag bearer for this....We did not think it was a good idea to thrust him out in front of the public eye in terms of leading the charge." There was general agreement among the tri-chairs and superintendent that he would do his best work primarily behind the scenes. Although the superintendent was generally respected in the community, there was a recognition that this asset had been diminished by past problems which in turn defined how he could be used most effectively.

School board members, staff, volunteers, and community members also described to what extent they believed the superintendent's role affected the outcome of the election. All three board members felt that the superintendent played an important role; "...more important than what was obvious." The same board member talked about the experience and skill it took to guide and encourage rather than to operate in a dictatorial fashion. A second board member emphasized the superintendent's time commitment and his effective coordination of the various committees. A third board member characterized his role as crucial in the overall planning and execution of the campaign.

The campaign tri-chairs agreed that the superintendent's role was important to the outcome of the election, but emphasized that this contribution was behind-the-scenes and less dominant than the role of the committee itself. One described the superintendent's role in this way: "He was our spiritual and inspirational leader....He was very important as the voice of experience who helped frame how the committee was organized...." The tri-chairs also felt that the superintendent's contribution was measured by his understanding that he should take a low key, less dominant approach.

The superintendent himself felt that his leadership was important to the outcome of the election. He described his work with the staff during opening workshop and stressed his personal commitment to the staff, school district, and community. The working relationship with the staff and community, in his words, "...caused us to do extraordinary things. It was particularly important for me to rally the staff." Other staff members characterized the superintendent's leadership effect as important, but also reflected that some people viewed his contribution differently. In one person's words, "[His role]...was not as strong as it could have been." In commenting further, however, the same person went on to explain that he did not agree with this assessment and noted that the critics probably didn't understand the superintendent's overall strategy. Based on the data as a whole, it appeared that the superintendent played an appropriate role and did well under difficult circumstances.

Summary of Albertville Case

The Albertville bond election campaign was successful because the school district and committee were strategic in their approach and did many things well. The closeness of the election underscored the importance of excellent planning, organization, and execution. The economic diversity, fallout from the book banning controversy, and the community's general perception of the school board and superintendent were deficits that had to be overcome. A split in the board after the unanimous vote to sponsor the election made the campaign even more challenging.

Preparation well before the election was part of the district's foundation that created an opportunity to be successful. Citizens and staff were involved over a year before the election on the Albertville Educational Quality Committee. This foundation was further strengthened by use of a community survey before the school board made a final decision on the contents and date of the bond election. In the words of one board member (who later opposed the election): "The survey was important because it extracted from the people what they wanted to happen." The superintendent talked about the importance of the survey in another way and emphasized the it "...caused people to believe we could do it." From a strategic point of view, the school board also used the survey results to determine the contents and amount of the bond proposal, both important to the success of the election.

The selection of the three tri-chairs and organization and execution of the committee were also key factors. Two of the three tri-chairs were potent weapons in the bond election campaign. The third effectively executed his limited role of raising money. One of the tri-chairs was an older female who was both well-known and nearly legendary in the area for her political and community activism. The other tri-chair was credible within the community and staff and was a meticulous planner. He brought a quiet passion and steadiness to the campaign. "The closeness of the election," he said, "told us that there was not a wasted or unnecessary step." Calling all 11,000 registered voters during the canvassing was a mammoth undertaking and a key part of the campaign. The committee also followed through with reminder calls on the day of the election. Getting teachers involved and soliciting college absentee votes were also important. It was noted earlier that Albertville used most of the election strategies identified in the research. All of them in combination were necessary to prevail in the narrow victory.

The role of the school board and superintendent were also important. The strategic decision to keep them largely in the background was the best choice to avoid additional polarization during the campaign. A split community and lack of trust in the school board and superintendent created a situation in which greater visibility would have resulted in more conflict and controversy. The superintendent made an important contribution by helping to plan the overall strategy, playing an appropriate role during the campaign, and supporting the volunteer committee. He also helped to keep the attention on children and the needs within the school district. In the final twenty-four hours, the superintendent reacted to the late negative flyer with a quick and aggressive written response. In the letter sent home to parents of school-aged children, he strongly refuted inaccurate information in the flyer and urged support for the bond election.

In conclusion, the Albertville School District was fortunate to prevail in a very close election. They overcame a difficult election context with what the superintendent characterized as "Commitment, commitment, good planning and organization." In the judgment of the researcher, Albertville needed all three dimensions to be successful in a very challenging context.

CHAPTER V

CASE STUDY TWO: SWANVILLE

Setting

Swanville Public Schools is one of the few suburban districts with only one city within its boundaries. A small portion of the city also overlaps with a neighboring school district. The area is suburban in nature and is located within about twenty minutes of the Minneapolis and St. Paul metropolitan area. The landscape is a mixture of old and new areas. Most of the older areas are fairly modest with moderate commercial and industrial development. Other parts of the school district are typically middle to upper middle class neighborhoods, many of which were built within the last ten years. The newer areas are predominantly residential with limited commercial development. Swanville is relatively close to other regional shopping areas.

Like other communities on the edge of urban areas, Swanville was in transition in 1993 changing from predominantly rural and small town characteristics to mostly suburban. Economically, this was a transition from lower middle and middle class families to a more affluent professional population. The estimated population of the school district at the time of the election was 19,927. The combination of housing, commercial, and industrial development gave Swanville a higher than average property value per pupil. About

56% of the general fund revenues came from local property taxes. At the time of the election, 6% of the district's residents were senior citizens which was less than the metropolitan average of 10.4%

The Swanville Public Schools was smaller than average within the metropolitan area at the time of the 1993 bond election. Seven schools housed 3,825 students in kindergarten through grade twelve. Five elementary schools contained students in grades kindergarten through grade five. Students in grades six though eight attended a middle school and the high school included grades nine through twelve. The total professional and classified staff totaled 473 at the time of the election resulted in a professional staff to pupil ratio one-tenth higher than the state average in 1992-93.

School-age children were present in 38% of the households within the school district. Elementary enrollments (K-6) were somewhat higher than secondary which resulted in a pattern of enrollment stability with moderate growth expected over the next ten years. The makeup of the student body was very homogeneous in 1993 with about 5% of the population minority. The diversity of Swanville's schools was beginning to increase at a higher rate, however, and this trend was expected to continue for the rest of the decade. Although a small percentage of students attended private schools outside of the district, no private schools were located within the borders of the school district during the 1993-94 school year.

Swanville's financial position was fairly strong at the time of the election as measured by available operating funds per pupil for the 1992-93 school year as reported by the Minnesota State

Department of Education. Total operating expenditures per pupil were higher than any of the nine school districts within the county and about $325 per pupil higher than the state average in the same year (MDE, "School District Profiles," 1993).

In 1993 the Swanville Public Schools was governed by seven school board members with an average tenure of six years. The range of service was from four to thirteen years with four women and three men serving on the school board during the election campaign. Swanville's school board was more experienced than average within the metropolitan area at the time of the bond election. The superintendent was in his fourth year in 1993-94 and had served an additional eight years as a superintendent in other school districts. He also had the advantage of knowing the community well because he had previously worked in the district for nine years in another capacity.

Two school finance elections had been conducted in the district in the previous five years. In 1989 Swanville passed both a bond and referendum election by fairly wide margins. The bond election was successful with 58% voting "yes" and the referendum passed with 55% of the voters giving their approval. One of the challenges for the school district and committee was to overcome what one person characterized as a common community perception: "Didn't we just do this?" The closeness in time between the 1989 and 1993 elections made it all the more important to convince the residents that there was a real need.

Pre-election Survey

The Swanville school board conducted a community survey just prior to the November election. A professional polling firm contacted 400 randomly selected households and collected data on a variety of school issues. This included measuring support for different aspects of a proposed bond election. Households were selected randomly from different areas of the school district to ensure balanced representation of the sample.

An evaluation of the overall approval rating of the school district found that 72% of the respondents rated the quality of the public schools as excellent or good. Twelve percent of the residents ranked the district as either fair or poor. Competent teachers, solid programs, and the overall quality of the schools were the most frequently mentioned characteristics liked about the district. When asked what citizens liked least, none of the responses exceeded the 10% level characterized by the researcher as significant. Continued growth in the area and declining quality were the only things mentioned by more than 5% of the respondents.

Questions focusing on the school board, superintendent, and staff revealed better than average support. The school board had a positive rating with a five-to-two margin of approval among those surveyed. Fifty-three percent rated the school board as either excellent or good with 22% responding fair or poor. The superintendent garnered a four-to-one approval rating with only 8% rating his performance as fair or poor. The evaluation of the superintendent's work placed him well above average compared to the statewide norm. Teachers also were regarded favorably within the school district with a seven-to-one approval rating. This rating also placed them above regional and state averages.

Residents reacted to a number of questions testing support for the bond election. Reacting to a 9.2 million dollar expansion and renovation proposal, 71% of the respondents expressed support and 21% opposition. Comparing the percentage of strong support to all opposition yielded a positive margin of six points. The technology proposal had even stronger support with a margin of eighteen points comparing strong support to all opposition. In the words of the researcher, the bonding proposal was "...solidly positioned for success" (Morris, 1993).

The residential survey of the Swanville Public Schools found the climate to be fairly positive for the 1993 bond election. Respondents were well satisfied with the quality of the schools and gave the school board, superintendent, and staff fairly high marks. The reaction to the specific bonding proposal was also positive and put the district in a position to be successful (Morris, 1993).

Sponsorship of the Election

The November bond election was preceded by about six months of pre-election planning and activities. Beginning in February of 1993, the superintendent and school board began to discuss the future needs of the district with particular emphasis on growth in the secondary schools and the need for technology. The indoor pool at the high school was also identified as a need, specifically related to the depth of the diving area. The superintendent asked the school board to nominate individuals from the community to work on a task force to develop recommendations for expansion and renovation. In his words, "We generally knew what we wanted and the number of rooms we needed, but we didn't have a specific plan. Once the committee was appointed, I intentionally stayed in the background so that the leadership could come from the group."

By late spring of 1993, about twenty-five individuals were working on the Better Schools Task Force. Membership included professional and support staff as well as people from the community. The superintendent attended most of the meetings as a resource person but did not lead the committee. In the words of a board member, "What we attempted to do was to get a cross section of the community including parents, senior citizens, administrators, and fraternal organizations trying to represent all segments of the community." Although two board members were appointed to the committee, their involvement was fairly limited. The Better Schools Task Force selected two individuals to serve as co-chairs, one of whom was a parent in the district. Their charge was to study the issues and then make recommendations to the school board as to the amount and contents of a bonding proposal.

The school board unanimously passed a resolution on July 19 to sponsor a special election on November 2. This was about fourteen weeks before the general election date. In approving the election resolution, the school board accepted and supported recommendations from the Better Schools Task Force. At the time the resolution was approved, there was reason to believe that the school board itself would be an asset in the campaign. The board acted unanimously in establishing both the contents and form of the ballot. The campaign was launched from a foundation of better than average board stability and harmony. While descriptions of the school board were predominantly positive, some respondents pointed to other issues relative to the school board and election campaign.

Two of the board officers and the superintendent characterized the effectiveness of the school board as strong in July of 1993 and solid in their support for the election. This was generally echoed by most knowledgeable respondents. A former school board member said that he thought the school board was perceived quite well. "There weren't any focal point issues prior to [the election]. There weren't any issues that really reached out, grabbed people by the throat, and brought them in either in support or against the school board." Continuing their previous strategy, the school board supported the campaign behind the scenes rather than leading the charge. One of the election co-chairs described their role as follows: "We wanted this to be a community thing more than a school thing so they [the school board] gave us advice and support buy they were not necessarily out working and that was by design."

Not everyone viewed the school board as a solid asset going into the campaign. One of the election co-chairs described what she perceived as "...a great deal of sentiment in the community that the board and administration have not kept themselves at arm's length and that the board was too much of a rubber stamp." She went on to say, however, that she did not believe that was a fair description, but simply reflected an administration and board that worked well together.

On the issue of being united, a teacher leader commented that the board was united, but "...their intensity for the individual issues might have varied." A former board member characterized the board's position as "a weak unity." He went on to say that, "I didn't see seven cheerleaders out there knocking on every single door." It was his perception that two of the board members may not have been completely solid, particularly as it related to the swimming pool improvements and the immediate need for expansion at the high school. He also mentioned "second and third hand" comments attributed to school board members by others in the community questioning whether the board support was unwavering.

The preponderance of the evidence described a school board that was generally perceived well in the community. Most respondents also characterized the school board's leadership as united going into the election campaign. Real or perceived issues that may have detracted from this asset will be explored in more depth later in the study.

The bonding proposal itself totaled $9,200,000 and was structured in three separate questions. Expansion and improvements to the high school totaled approximately $6,600,000. Implementation of the district's technology plan requested $2,000,000 in bonding authority and upgrades to the pool added another $570,000. These three proposals were placed on the ballot in the order listed above preceded by a proposal to renew an operating levy in question one. The expansion and improvements to the high school represented over 70% of the costs, not including that portion of the technology attributable to that building. The proposed improvements were broad in scope including areas such as the high school media center, gymnasium, cafeteria, locker rooms, science classrooms, and health and safety upgrades. The advantages and increased capabilities within the media center were put at center stage in marketing the proposals.

Although the school district contracted with a professional polling firm, the data were not available at the time the board actually passed the election resolution. For that reason, the board was not able to consider the spending and taxing appetite of district residents or test the support for a particular proposal before scheduling the election and establishing the contents and structure of the ballot. There was some level of frustration with the lateness of the polling data as well as different perspectives about the reason for the delay.

The bond election was conducted on Tuesday, November 2, which was the general election day. The board did not have discretion about the date of the bond election because the ballot included an operating referendum that had to be conducted on the general election date. If the school board had wanted to avoid the general election date, they would have had to schedule a separate election for the bonding proposals either before or after the operating referendum. The school board did not seriously consider this option. Although the school district was the only local unit of government conducting an election on that date, interest in the election resulted in the largest voter turnout in the history of the district.

Campaign Planning and Organization

The leadership for planning and organizing the campaign grew naturally out of the Better Schools Task Force. Two of the parents of that committee became the co-chairs of the bond election effort. Since the task force had evaluated facility needs and developed recommendations for the school board, there was significant "buy in" from those citizens and a natural constituency going into the campaign. The election committee itself was composed of citizens, professional and support staff, and two board members including the school board chair. Many of the workers were reactivated from the 1989 election. According to the superintendent, "Many of the people had a real good idea of what needed to be done because it was still fresh in their minds from the 1989-90 campaign."

One of the two co-chairs was a male, had children in the school, and was widely viewed as a strong leader. A member of the teaching staff characterized him as "...a strong person who wasn't unduly influenced by the administration making [the election] a community issue rather than an administration campaign." The second co-chair was a well-known and respected community member who had never had children in school. In her words, "I'm interested in education, I'm interested in where my tax money goes, and I was happy to co-chair the election campaign." Both co-chairs were selected by the committee itself rather than by the superintendent or school board.

Once established, the committee was fairly independent and the role of the administration was to advise rather than direct. The group organized itself in committees including community education, communications, outreach to groups, block-to-block campaign, and fund raising. Each of the individual committees was co-chaired by a lay person and an administrator. The community education effort was launched first and had as its goal to provide information to citizens that would demonstrate the need for the bonding proposals. The purpose of the other committees is self-evident or will be discussed later in the study.

Role of the School Board

As mentioned before, the role of the board was that of support in the background. When asked to quantify the extent of school board involvement in the campaign, the board chair responded, "Hardly at all." This behind-the-scenes role was intentional, generally favored by most respondents, but was not without some questions about the efficacy of this approach. A teacher expressed some concern that the lack of visibility might have sent the wrong message to the community: "I wasn't left with the impression that the board members were particularly zealous in promoting the election."

The board chair made a distinction between the role of the board before adopting the committee's recommendations and during the actual campaign. "I think it was a positive that the ultimate [facility] recommendations came from the committee rather than the board providing the impetus." In retrospect, she viewed the board's involvement in the campaign differently: "I think the board could have been more involved, but I'm not sure it would have been to our benefit. The board probably should have been more involved in the presentations to various groups within the community rather than leaving that responsibility mostly to the superintendent." Overall, the impression was left that the school board could have been more active.

Role of the Superintendent

The superintendent described himself as a resource to the campaign committee and "...intentionally tried not to become the leader of the group." Both citizens and school staff emphasized their belief that the campaign needed to be grass roots in nature to be successful. The board chair reflected that, "The administration explained what we needed. They [the committee] listened to the administrators, but I think they pretty much made up their own mind as to what was possible and what wasn't." One of the election co-chairs characterized the role of the superintendent and administration this way: "They were always assessable, they were knowledgeable, and they came to meetings prepared. From there we took over and they stayed nicely in the background for when we needed them."

Nearly all the respondents evaluated the superintendent's contribution in a positive light and reaffirmed that it would have been a mistake to have the campaign driven top down by the superintendent. Several respondents characterized the preparation and groundwork that was done by the superintendent before the campaign began as important. One of the seven board members saw things differently, however, and thought that the behind-the-scenes approach had some drawbacks: "The administration effectively left [the committee] in the dark as to what they really wanted." This board member recounted conversations with some committee members who expressed some frustration and just wanted to be told what the administration wanted so they could react. According to the board member, "Some of them were a little upset..."

Role of Staff

Swanville had fairly broad participation from staff members beginning with participation on the Better Schools Task Force which developed facility recommendations for the school board. Teachers were most heavily involved in three stages of the campaign including voter canvassing. The committee began with a block-to-block canvassing effort including both parents and teachers. Although the results of the personal contact were encouraging, the canvassing strategy switched to telephoning when it became evident that the committee did not have the time or human resources to complete the door-to-door campaign. The superintendent estimated that about a third of the canvassing was done by staff and the committee reached about two-thirds of the households. Staff members were also involved with reminder calls on election day and preparing a variety of mailings.

The consensus of opinion was that participation by teachers was healthy and significant, but there was some feeling that the committee could have used more involvement earlier in the campaign. A teacher described the involvement of teachers as "heavy," but said that most of it was in the last three weeks or so when teachers realized the job and pay consequences if the operating levy was not renewed. One of the co-chairs commented that, "Teachers didn't get involved until the very end, and then they manned the telephone calls." A central office administrator characterized staff involvement this way: "I think that we had some difficulty early getting the amount of teacher participation that could have been helpful. Now that's not to say we didn't have a lot of help--we did--but we could have used a lot more."

Election Outcome

Swanville's special election took place on Tuesday, November 2, 1993. The proposed expansion and improvements to the high school failed by a vote of 2,249 to 2,083. The technology package in question three lost by 53 votes, 2,192 to 2,139. Improvements to the pool proposed in question four failed by the largest margin, 2,572 to 1,747. The renewal of the operating levy in question one was approved with slightly over 51% of the electorate casting "yes" votes. District officials estimated voter turnout at 31% which was higher than other district elections in the previous five years.

Factors Affecting the Outcome of the Election

In the third chapter of this study, I summarized literature relevant to this study. This included non-strategic and strategic factors thought to affect the outcome of bond elections and a closer look at any critical events and the leadership role of the superintendent. In this section of the study, I will revisit these four factors from the perspective of knowledgeables and survey responses.

Non-strategic Factors

A non-strategic factor is a contextual variable that affects the outcome of school bond referenda. Philip Piele categorizes these variables as environmental, socioeconomic, and psychological factors. The economic context of Swanville was heterogeneous and diverse. Similar to many of the third ring suburbs, the district was in transition with nearly one third of the residents having arrived within the last five years. Many of these new families were young professional families commuting into the city for work. A survey before the election found that 45% of the residents came from up-scale, white collar households. The median income at the time of the election was $43,750. Thirty-four percent of the respondents reported that they had finished college or had attended postgraduate courses. The economic profile was generally an asset going into the campaign. Swanville did, however, have a greater percentage of blue collar households as compared to many of the other outlying suburban areas (Morris, 1993).

When describing the community context, respondents described a school district in transition. Over the last fifty years, Swanville had changed from predominantly farms, to moderate blue collar housing and limited commercial development, to housing developments that appealed to younger and more affluent residents. One of the co-chairs talked with pride about how the farmers and merchants responded to the first wave of housing twenty-five years ago and pulled together to build a school. These same residents, many second or third generation, were now nearing retirement age and many were less willing to accept the responsibility and burden for providing for students into the next century. "They think the younger people should carry the burden," she said, "like they did before." The school board chair characterized this as "...a tug of war that we've got going on within the community between the older residents and the newer folks moving in." Many of the newcomers had a higher expectation for all forms of public services. This tug of war also related to what level of taxation the community was willing to accept.

The Swanville School Board adopted a proposed property tax levy in September of 1993. The total levy for all funds totaled $11,370,897 which was approximately 3% less than the previous year. This did not include tax levies for the cities, county, or other smaller taxing jurisdictions. The superintendent reported that the

"Truth-In-Taxation" hearing resulted in only eight to ten individuals in attendance, not surprising considering that the total level of taxation actually went down. The proposed renewal of the referendum levy was still problematic, however, because in 1993 the legislature required that new referenda be taxed on market value which had the effect of shifting tax burden from commercial to residential property.

Within the context of the overall tax climate, respondents were asked to characterize the importance of the cost of the bonding proposal and the level of taxation required to service the new debt. Information provided by the school district estimated about a $140 increase for all four questions for a home valued at $100,000. The taxes required for the three bonding proposals totaled only $50 of this $140 increase. When asked about the importance of cost and taxes, one board member lamented that the board was "...up front with the community that this was a bare-bones proposal. It was as bare-bones as possible, and I think we presented it that way." Even though the board believed that they had presented an austere package, a concern about taxes was reinforced from all respondents.

Individuals knowledgeable about the election expressed a similar theme in a variety of ways. An administrator said, "It was very important, and I can't think of anything that was more important than the cost." A former school board member identified cost as "...the most important factor." How one interpreted the underlying reasons for this perspective varied considerably among the respondents. A current school board member expressed frustration with how schools were financed and pointed to other suburban districts that had passed much larger bonding proposals with less impact on property taxes. She emphasized the lack of commercial tax base and the resulting tax impact on homes as a fundamental problem.

An administrator asserted that problems with the referendum renewal negatively affected the whole package. Changes made by the 1993 legislature put the school district in the unenviable position of ending up with fewer referendum dollars for a greater cost to the home owner. "There was information...that was hard to get to the public," she said. "It was hard to do it in an understandable kind of way." This problem related to changing the tax calculations for the referendum levy from tax capacity to market value. Although this did not apply to the bonding proposals in the same way, a number of respondents believed that this issue, within the context of a tight economic climate, negatively affected the three bonding questions on the ballot.

Respondents not directly involved with the school district agreed that costs and taxes were of primary importance, but emphasized other aspects of these issues. A former school board member posed a question that he heard during the campaign: "Do we need it now, or do we need it in 1997?" He went on to say that many senior citizens viewed the proposal as a Cadillac. "I think people around here care about education, care about kids, but at the same time the economics just weren't there. You could have sold to the nth degree and probably still would not have had some of those things pass because of economics." An opponent of the election asserted that, "People had just about had it with their tax bills." He went on the state that many others didn't think they were getting their money's worth. A city council member commented that many people would have voted "no" even if it meant a one dollar increase in their taxes because of concerns about the school board and administration.

As mentioned earlier in the study, the Swanville School Board did not have the results of the survey data until after the board had set the structure and contents of the ballot. Since the data were relatively positive, there is a question of whether or not this made any difference in the outcome. Because of the lateness of the study, however, the board and administration did not have an opportunity to tailor the proposal after analysis of the survey data.

The election context in Swanville was also shaped by the history of other elections within the school district. As was described earlier, the school district had passed both bond and referendum elections on the first attempt in 1989. Both passed by healthy margins. The school board had also passed a major bond election in the 1970's to build the current high school. This election history painted a fairly positive picture for the school district. A former school board member commented that, "We've always been relatively successful in getting them passed. I think prior to this there was only one that failed." The election history within the school district was a positive factor going into the campaign.

Respondents were also asked to discuss any unique features of the community that might have affected the outcome of the election in Swanville. A teacher and resident of the community pointed to a lack of community identity. "There's no central core area or anything that unites the community," he said. "There's no common business district, there's no community center to identify with." Other people mentioned the community's senior citizens as important. Although not usually large by suburban standards, they were an aging population with the typical concerns of individuals on fixed incomes. Most respondents felt that seniors generally opposed the special election. The transition from rural to suburban and the dichotomy between blue collar households and younger professional families were most often mentioned by respondents.

One of the referendum co-chairs, in discussing this dichotomy, described the challenge of "...kind of passively meshing everyone." This challenge went beyond ability to pay and manifested itself in terms of expectations. In the words of the superintendent, "Many of our older residents kind of prided themselves on getting along without some things, of doing without, or making due with less." Many of the newer residents have very different expectations. "They will not accept the fact that they're handing over their child to you," asserted a school board member. "They have college degrees and good jobs, they know what their children need, and they want results." This same transition also was explained in terms of power structure. In the view of most respondents, the character of many older areas tended to be "good old boy" in nature, with a few prominent leaders having significant influence on public opinion. Newer and more affluent neighborhoods tended to have more diffused power and influence. The context of the community provided significant strategic and communication challenges. Part of this was played out in the media.

Respondents were asked to characterize the importance and impact of the media on the outcome of the bond election. Swanville had two overlapping weekly newspapers that covered the 1993 election. This was in addition to a major metropolitan newspaper that would occasionally write about events in the district. In this election, most of the coverage came from the two weekly papers and the school district's own newspaper. In a survey conducted before the election, sixty-nine percent of the respondents identified the school district's newspaper as a major source of information about the school district. This was higher than any other media available within the school district. The community weekly newspaper was the second most important medium with about half of the individuals saying it was a major source of information (Morris, 1993).

All of the respondents were generally satisfied with the coverage. One of the co-chairs characterized the coverage is "...straightforward and very unbiased." The community newspaper did support all three bond proposals on the editorial page as well as the referendum renewal. Local newspapers also carried about a dozen positive letters to the editor and the metropolitan newspaper printed one favorable opinion. There was only one negative letter printed in local newspapers before the election and according to a campaign worker, "He always writes negative letters to the editor." One of the co-chairs summed up the letter campaign this way: "The committee asked people to write letters to the editor. The only letters that appeared...were those orchestrated by the committee."

Two other initiatives related to media coverage were important during the campaign. The superintendent and a member of the school board made overt efforts to strengthen the relationship and influence coverage with the local reporter providing coverage related to the school district. "We took her to lunch a couple of times," said the superintendent. "These were complex issues and we didn't want them messed up. We spent a lot of time with her." The school district also produced a video that aired on public access as well as its own print media covering the election.

Overall, the media coverage appeared to be generally favorable. Individuals closest to the election did not think, however, that it played a large part in the outcome of the election. The superintendent concluded that, "It was neutral to slightly positive perhaps." A parent volunteer commented that, "I don't think it was a big deal." A central office administrator agreed saying, "I don't think they played either a positive or negative role." These characterizations paralleled other comments from individuals knowledgeable about the election. The media was there, coverage was fairly balanced, but did not have a big impact. A community resident summed it up as follows: "I don't think it made much difference what was written in the newspaper. I think that a lot of people had made up their minds...."

Organized opposition is recognized as a powerful variable in school bond elections and a difficult obstacle to overcome in districts where it is present. Individuals involved in the Swanville election were asked whether organized opposition played a role in the outcome of the 1993 bond election. The consensus of respondents was that there was no organized opposition within the school district. There were sporadic activities against the election and according to a teacher, "...a few people that were active and outspoken." A former school board member suggested that it might have been easier for the board to deal with the opposition had they been more organized. "I don't believe it was particularly well organized, but you heard about it in the coffee shops. It was kind of an amoebae that reached out and grew. If it had been organized, perhaps [the board] could have laid their hands on it and dealt with it."

Fallout from an unsuccessful city park election was mentioned by more than one informant as an issue smoldering under the surface. A school board member referred to "...an undertow because of the failure of the city's parks and recreation referendum." The city's election was defeated by about 100 votes in the spring of 1993, and some individuals involved with the city campaign were disappointed that the school board's support had not been more enthusiastic and public. Although individual board members and administrators worked in support of the proposal, no official action was taken by the school board. A member of the city council acknowledged that there was some "bad blood" related to the failed city election. "I had heard that some people on the school board were telling people not to vote for the parks and recreation proposal because if the city got their election passed it would be harder for the school district." This individual said that he found this hard to believe himself, but knew that a lot of other people thought it was true.

Senior citizens were also a source of some opposition during the election campaign. Both the mayor and a city council member identified the opinions of senior citizens as important in the school district's election. "A lot of senior citizens were against it," according to the city council member. "I don't think there was a highly organized group, but I did hear from five or six senior citizens that they had been called by different people to vote 'no'." Most of those calls came from other senior citizens. The city official also claimed that the senior citizens wanted a senior citizen center. "They have put it on the record," he said, "and they will vote against any referendum issue until they have the center." According to the same official, he told the school board to talk to the senior citizens and claimed that a senior citizen center could have been addressed as part of the school district's bonding proposal. "They wanted to talk to the school district about this but got the message [from them] that this was the city's function and the city needed to do it."

In summary, the election context in Swanville was both complex and interesting. A dichotomous economic and demographic population posed some difficulty for the school district. The changing nature of the population and neighborhoods resulted in stark differences in expectations, demand for educational services, and willingness to pay. A significant portion of the district tended to be blue collar in nature and less able to absorb additional property taxes whether or not the district successfully made its case for need. The election history within the district was generally favorable and suggested a good opportunity to be successful. The position of the school board and staff were fairly ong in 1993 and supported the district's chances in the special ection. Some problems with the senior citizen population and lirect fallout from the city's special election probably hampered orts to win on November 2. These factors, in combination, sulted in a moderately positive context for the bond election in 93.

ategic Factors

Strategic factors are defined as elements in the set of various thods selected and designed to form a plan to affect the outcome school bond referenda. The researcher presented school officials d other knowledgeable respondents with a summary of thirty-ht strategies identified in the literature. Individuals first ntified which of the strategies were used in Swanville's bond ection.

Twenty-six out of thirty-eight (68%) of the election ategies were used in the Swanville bond election. Strategies not ed in the campaign included the following:

Bond election plan organized by the superintendent

Conducted a formal or informal analysis to identify influentials within the community

Made a conscious decision to limit the campaign to a specific number of weeks

Students in the school district were actively involved in the campaign

- Communications strategies were tailored to different audiences
- Made a conscious decision to set the date of the election for a specific week or month in order to gain an edge in the campaign
- Demonstrated responsiveness to the opposition, diffused their platform, gained their support by modifying the referendum, incorporated their ideas
- Selected an overall communication theme/slogan to promote passage of the bond election
- Assessed the mood of the employees towards the school district formally or informally
- Identified and provided transportation to potential voters who required transportation to the polls
- Secured city council(s) endorsement for the bond election
- Obtained a bond election endorsement from the local teacher union affiliate

Individuals knowledgeable about the election campaign also :ed the relative importance of each of the thirty-eight strategies the survey. Responses ranged from "essential" to "not important" a five point Likert scale. Ratings from all individuals were then eraged using arithmetic means to rank each strategy from most portant to the outcome of the 1993 bond election in Swanville to ıst important. The following five strategies obtained an average ore of at least 4.5 on a 5.0 scale:

- Obtained a unanimous vote from all members of the school board to sponsor a bond election (5.0)
- Used "Get Out The Vote" reminder calls to all identified supporters (4.875)
- Encouraged citizens participation in the school district by giving citizens the opportunity to become involved (4.625)
- School district provided information and inservice to citizens working on bond election campaign (4.625)
- Made campaign committee assignments to canvass citizens within the school district (4.5)

Individuals involved in the Swanville campaign also responded two open-ended questions related to election strategies. The st question asked them to identify five of the thirty-eight rategies thought to be most important to the outcome of the ection. Two of the thirty-eight election strategies were entified as most important by at least half of the individuals mpleting the survey:

- Used a formal or informal survey/poll to gather data on the citizens' feelings towards the proposal prior to the election (5 out of 8)
- Encouraged citizen participation in the school district by giving citizens the opportunity to become involved (4 out of 8)

The first strategy identified in the open-ended question, using a ormal or informal survey, did not make the list of strategies obtaining an average score of 4.5 or higher. Its average value was relatively high, however, at 4.25. The second strategy identified in he open-ended responses was also one of the five with the highest average value.

Individuals knowledgeable about the bond election campaign were then asked to identify strategies thought to have affected the outcome of the election that were not included in the list of thirty-eight on the survey instrument. One of the eight respondents dentified a strategy thought to be important that was not listed in he survey:

1. Personal interaction in the block-to-block canvassing campaign

Overall, Swanville prepared for and conducted the bond election in a strategic fashion. Sixty-eight percent of the identified strategies were used in the planning and campaign. Particular strengths were use of citizens before and during the campaign, use of media, and the block-to-block canvassing. Completing reminder calls on election day was also consistent with the research on successful elections. One central office administrator did comment, however, that the canvassing had to move to "Plan B" because of a ack of block workers. Most of the canvassing was done by telephone ater in the campaign.

Critical Incidents

A critical incident is an unplanned, unexpected event occurring within a relatively close period before the vote that affects the use of strategic factors, non-strategic factors, and the outcome of the election. Individuals knowledgeable about the election were asked to identify whether any such incidents occurred and, if so, what effect they had on the outcome of the election.

Respondents mentioned three issues within the context of this inquiry, but only one of them was believed to have significantly affected the outcome of the election. Two individuals mentioned problems with the 1993 fall enrollment coming in quite a bit less than what had been projected. A campaign worker talked about a fall P.T.A. meeting that "...went on for three hours" talking about enrollment. The actual K-12 fall enrollment in 1993-94 was 85 students less that what was projected, partially because of a management change in a rental housing complex. This enrollment deficit had 1993-94 budget implications of approximately $335,000. This same campaign worker asserted, however, that the problem didn't come out much before the election. One of the board members also mentioned teacher negotiations. "Negotiations were beginning to get pretty heated at that time," she said, "but I don't think it had any impact." No one else mentioned this as a critical incident.

The most important critical incidents related to the timing and use of survey data. The school board had previously approved a resolution on July 19 to sponsor the bond election. Another board resolution was passed on September 17 which set the amount and structure of the proposal. The survey data, however, were not available to the school district until October 6, only three and one-half weeks before the election. According to the superintendent, the district originally planned to have the data collected so that they were available to the committee by the middle of September, about six weeks before the election. Although this schedule excluded the possibility of using the data to develop a strategic plan for the election, the results would have been available to shape strategies during most of the campaign. The eventual delay until October 6 minimized the value of the survey and put the district in more of a reactive mode with little time to respond.

Directly related to the timing of the survey data, was another issue mentioned within the context of a critical incident. On the basis of survey data and response to block work and phone canvassing, the school board and campaign committee came to the conclusion in mid to late October that the referendum renewal was in trouble. Prior to that time, there was the general assumption that since this question was a renewal of an existing levy and not a request for new money, that it would be passed fairly easily. As a result of that assumption, most of the committee's emphasis had been on gaining support for the three bonding proposals. The committee made a sharp turn towards the referendum question in the last three weeks of the campaign. This critical decision probably saved the operating levy, but at the same time may have been the final straw in the loss of two of three losing bond proposals. According to a board member, "The emphasis switched from the bond to the referendum." A teacher reinforced this shift saying that "...seventy-five to eighty percent of our efforts [late in the campaign] were focused on the referendum not the bond issue." Given the closeness of questions two and three, this shift was critical and probably affected the outcome of the election.

Leadership Style and Role of Superintendent

The leadership style and role of the superintendent was one of the important research questions focused on in this study. In addition to open-ended questions investigating this variable, respondents were also asked to label the superintendent's predominant leadership style using a conceptual model developed by Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal. This model was discussed in the literature review and depicts leadership behavior in four categories. Individuals closely involved with the bond election were asked to identify which of the four descriptions best described the leadership role of their superintendent in the 1993 bond election.

Six out of ten respondents identified Human Resource as the predominant leadership style of the superintendent. In general, this leadership orientation is characterized by an emphasis on empowering people and focusing on individual needs, participation, communication, relationships, and development. The only other leadership style mentioned by more than one person was Structural. The superintendent selected Structural as his own assessment of his predominant style. A Structural orientation focuses on planning, organizing, and systematizing. The individual most critical of the board, superintendent, and bond election campaign selected Political as the leadership characteristic that best described the superintendent. Individuals were also asked to identify the leadership characteristic least like the superintendent. Responses spread over all four of the leadership dimensions with the largest number split evenly between Political and Symbolic.

Three of the questions on the interview guide explored the importance and role of the superintendent in the 1993 bond election campaign. The first question had respondents evaluate how important they believed it was to have a good relationship between the superintendent and other key groups including the school board, staff, and community. A second related question explored the quality of these relationships in Swanville just prior to and during the bond election. A third inquiry asked individuals to evaluate how important the superintendent's role was in the outcome of the election.

All the respondents involved with the election in Swanville believed that the relationship between a superintendent, the board, and other groups within the school district was of critical importance. A central office administrator answered without hesitation saying, "Absolutely essential without a doubt." In the words of a resident of the community, "I look at the superintendent as the CEO of the firm, and if there isn't confidence in his leadership ...it would take a considerable amount of effort to overcome that...handicap."

Individuals consistently characterized the relationship between the superintendent and other groups as fairly strong and healthy leading into the bond election. Of primary importance was his relationship with the school board in Swanville. Both school board members interviewed described that relationship as "very good" in 1993. The superintendent concurred with this assessment and said, "I think we worked very well together." A member of the teaching staff supported this picture and asserted that, "The superintendent and school board were a very strong and cohesive unit."

The relationship between the superintendent and staff was also characterized as strong just prior to and throughout the bond election campaign. Several individuals mentioned some problems following the election related to negotiations and budget cuts, but all agreed that these issues had little or no effect on the bond election in 1993. A member of the teaching staff summed up this perspective and said, "Oh, I think at the time it [the superintendent's relationship with staff] was very positive. Since then I think financial issues have strained things a little, but not to a great extent." A former school board member commented that overall he believed that relationships with staff were pretty good. "Some of the old-timers were a little bit leery about the quality thing [total quality management], but other than that I think morale was pretty good at the time of the election."

Most individuals also characterized the superintendent's relationship with the community as quite healthy. Several individuals talked about his involvement in community activities as a strength. A former school board member commented that, "He makes a concerted effort to be involved in community activities that fosters some trust in him." Both board members rated the superintendent's relationship with the community as good. One of the block workers explained that the relationship was healthier before and during the campaign than later. "We supported him [during the campaign]," she said, "but later felt betrayed when the cuts started. I think the community was just real let down." A member of the city council said that he believed there was room for improvement in terms of the relationship with the city.

School board members, staff, volunteers, and community members were asked to evaluate to what extent they believed the superintendent's role affected the outcome of the election. Both school board members cited the superintendent's communication skills as an important asset that supported the bond election campaign. "I think he can communicate," said one, "that's the important thing." "I think he was effective in getting the word out," said the other. A former school board member wasn't as sure about the superintendent's impact. "Obviously it mattered, but from what I saw on the front-line stuff, I don't think [the superintendent] impacted it a great deal one way or the other." One of the co-chairs reiterated what she characterized as "...moral support behind the scenes." He wasn't necessarily out there hands-on campaigning, but the committee didn't necessarily want him out there." She went on to say that what he did was important and appropriate. A teacher made the observation that the superintendent's presentations focused too much on facilities and not enough on the benefits to students. Most respondents, however, agreed with the assessment of a central office administrator who said, "I'm not sure that he could have done any more to get that election passed."

Summary of the Swanville Case

The context of the Swanville case was complex, moderately positive, and contrasted in terms of how various factors affected the outcome of the election. A variety of demographic and economic variables painted a fairly positive picture. The education levels of the community, age of residents, and average salary were generally assets in 1993. Other factors detracted from this profile, however, including a significant number of older, blue collar households and senior citizens. Many of these residents had a smaller appetite for public services and the related property taxes. Many also had lower expectations of what they wanted the school district to provide for students and the community.

Political variables also shaped the election context, the most significant being the city's unsuccessful parks and recreation bond earlier in the year. Several respondents, including the mayor and a city council member, described what they believed was some "bad blood" between the school and city. Who had supported what election and to what extent were the talk among some groups in coffee shops during the school district's campaign. Senior citizens also were active to some extent and probably tended to oppose the election. Two individuals alluded to their desire to have a permanent senior center as indirectly related to opposition to the school district's proposal.

Facility planning orchestrated by the school board and administration in the months preceding the bond election campaign was an asset. The Better Schools Task Force, predominantly made up of citizens within the school district, developed facility recommendations for the school board and created a grass-roots organization leading into the campaign. Two individuals from this group made the natural transition to co-chairing the bond election campaign. Their leadership and effort were universally praised as effective. Although the committee implemented 68% of the election strategies identified in the literature, there were other strategies that were not used that could have contributed to the election campaign. Overall, the planning and participation by citizens were positive and supported the district's efforts to sell the proposal.

All of the qualitative indicators measuring perception of the school board, superintendent, and staff were strong before and during the bond election. Both survey and interview data indicated that these key individuals and groups were generally viewed positively. Most respondents also characterized their relationships with one another as an asset. This generally healthy climate created an environment that encouraged the kind of participation and effort that the district needed to have an opportunity to be successful. Any minor problems with these relationships were kept under control or in the background and did not appear to detract from the campaign. Media coverage paralleled this situation and was generally positive throughout.

The behind-the-scenes role of the superintendent and particularly the school board was intentional, and most respondents felt this strategy was effective and appropriate. It should be noted, however, that some school board and committee members questioned the effectiveness of this approach after the fact. Other respondents claimed that the school board's lack of visibility was interpreted as lack of support by some individuals in the community. One board member also asserted that some members of the campaign committee were frustrated with lack of direction from the superintendent. Although most data supported the efficacy of this approach, some of the evidence suggested that the board, and perhaps the superintendent to a lesser extent, fell short of the optimal level of participation and exposure.

Variables related to the collection and use of survey data had some affect on the outcome of the election. First, the results of the survey data were not available until several weeks before the election date. Originally, the school district had planned to have the information at least four weeks earlier. Although it is uncertain exactly why the data were late on the scene, it is clear that the school board and administration did not have an opportunity to interpret the information before finalizing the structure and contents of the ballot. Most individuals, including the school board and superintendent, discounted this as an issue and did not believe that anything would have changed.

Shifting emphasis from the bonding proposals to the renewal of the referendum levy also affected the outcome of the election. Data collected by the polling firm and canvassers convinced the district that the referendum renewal was in trouble. During the final three weeks of the campaign, the committee and staff shifted priorities and emphasized the consequences of a failed referendum renewal. While this strategy probably saved the referendum question, it also undoubtedly contributed to the failure of two out of three bonding proposals, both of which lost by narrow margins. One can surmise that these two proposals would have been successful if the committee had stayed the course to the end and continued to emphasize the bonding proposal.

In conclusion, the Swanville School District conducted well-designed and strategic campaign that came up a little short. Two of the three bonding proposals had an excellent chance of being successful given the election context and the district's strategic approach to the campaign. There is some evidence to suggest that the campaign might have profited by slightly more direction from the superintendent and involvement by the school board. The district's decision to put most of its persuasive marbles in the referendum renewal during the final two or three weeks of the election campaign was a critical and determining factor. Given the circumstances, the district made a calculated decision with the risk and trade-off understood. Since the margin was so tight on the referendum question, one can conclude that the shift in emphasis was necessary and that the referendum would not have passed without this late push. Having the opportunity to carefully analyze and interpret survey data much sooner might have created an opportunity to implement other strategies to avoid the necessity for a course correction and bring home success for two of the three bonding proposals.

CHAPTER VI

CASE STUDY THREE: WINDVILLE

Setting

Windville is the largest and oldest of the seven cities that make up the Windville Public Schools. There are six other communities located either totally or partially within the boundaries of the school district. These suburban communities are situated within about twenty minutes of the metropolitan area of Minneapolis and St. Paul. Although sharing the school district in common, the seven communities were starkly heterogeneous in 1993. Many of the newer areas of the district were exclusively residential and among the most affluent in the metropolitan area. There were also areas of the school district that were predominantly older, blue collar neighborhoods with commercial areas similar in nature to small cities. Residents had access to other large retail developments and shopping malls within about twenty minutes of the school district offices.

Approximately 36,000 people lived within the Windville School District in 1993 with over half of the working adults commuting into St. Paul or Minneapolis for work. Many others were employed in small businesses primarily in the city of Windville. The housing within the school district ranged from very modest starter or retirement homes to properties in excess of one million dollars in market value. The combination of commercial development and many higher valued homes gave Windville a property value per pupil that was two and one half times the state average and the highest among schools districts in the county. At the time of the election, senior citizens comprised 15% of the population of the district which was about four and one-half percent higher than average in the greater metropolitan area. This percentage was much higher in the city of Windville with a disproportionate number of senior citizens living there.

At the time of the bond election in 1993, the K-12 enrollment in the school district was 4731 which was a little smaller than average within the seven county metropolitan area. Students were housed in five elementary schools serving students in grades kindergarten through grade six. One junior high was made up of students in grades seven and eight. Windville Senior High included grades nine through twelve. The number of professional and classified staff totaled 653 full-time equivalencies in 1993, and the professional staff to pupil ratio was about nine-tenths lower than the state average.

School-age children were present in about 20% of the households at the time of the election. The enrollment in grades one through six was nearly 500 students more than grades seven through twelve in 1993 which set up a pattern of moderate growth for the remainder of the decade. The minority enrollment was 11.3% during the 1992-93 school year which resulted in a fairly homogenous student population. The district had, however, experienced greater diversity in recent years with an increasing percentage of minority enrollment predicted for the future. Windville had a fairly high private school population with 23% of its resident students enrolled in other than public schools. This amounted to about 1,200 students attending one of the seven parochial schools located within the school district (MDE, "School District Profiles," 1993).

Windville's sources of revenue paralleled the district's property wealth mentioned earlier in the study. Approximately 95% of the district's funding came from local property taxes and only about 1% from state aid. This funding mix was reflective of a school district with unusually high property value per pupil. This compared to a statewide average of about 48% state funding in 1993. Windville's financial position was poor in 1993 with a negative operating fund balance in excess of $700,000. Total operating expenditures per pupil were about $125 per student higher than the state average and a little above average as compared to other school districts within the county (MDE, "School District Profiles," 1993). Windville's school board was made of four men and two women in 1993. It was a very young board with the most experienced person in his fifth year at the time of the election. Everyone else had three or fewer years experience and overall the average tenure on the school board was two and one-half years. The school district was led by an interim superintendent who was completing his second year in that position. It was the school board's intent to finish the 1993-94 school year with the interim position, and then fill the vacancy sometime in 1994. The interim superintendent knew the district well having spent a total of twelve years in the district as assistant superintendent.

Two school finance elections had been conducted in the last five years. Two operating levies tried in 1988 failed to win approval. The first question sought to renew an existing levy and failed by approximately 200 votes. Question two on the ballot requested additional levy authority to reduce class sizes and make program improvements. This proposal also failed with 1,818 supporting the plan and 2,323 voting "no". The Windville School District was also unsuccessful in a May, 1993 bond election which was very similar in purpose and content to the December proposal being investigated. In the May special election, the district requested authority for more than $23 million in a single question. Most of the money was to be used for a new junior high school. The proposal also included implementation of the district's technology plan, expansion and remodeling, and completion of some handicapped and life safety code projects. The May election had failed with 56% of the voters rejecting the proposal.

Pre-election Survey

The Windville School District conducted a comprehensive survey in late 1990. A professional polling firm contacted approximately 400 randomly selected residents living in the district. The sample was drawn to be representative of the relative population of cities within the school district. The survey found that overall approval of the district was quite good with 68% rating the quality of education in Windville as excellent or good. Only 10% gave the district a mark of fair or poor. More than half of the respondents liked the achievement levels attained by students, the quality of teaching, the extra-curricular activities, and the teaching of basic skills. The survey did not ask residents to comment on specific problems facing Windville or aspects of the district that they did not like.

Although residents did not rate how well they thought the superintendent and board were doing, there were some questions in the area of finances that hinted at how the board was perceived. Respondents were asked if the school board spent money wisely. Forty-three percent of the sample expressed agreement while 24% felt that this was not a characteristic of the board. Residents were also asked whether the board only asked for more funds when they had exhausted all other alternatives. In this question, 49% agreed with the statement while 27% responded in the negative.

Respondents reacted to a number of questions dealing with overcrowding, facility needs, and a new junior high. People in the community seemed to have a good understanding about the space crunch in the elementary schools. One of the survey questions suggested to residents that the elementary schools were overcrowded and changes needed to be made to correct the situation. Fifty-four percent of the sample expressed agreement with that conclusion and 14% disagreed. This support for elementary expansion did not generalize district-wide. When asked about the need for extensive expansion and improvements to district schools in general, 24% agreed with the need while 56% did not. Forty percent of the respondents said that the schools were not overcrowded and 24% said they were. What to do about the old junior high was mixed. Forty percent favored building a new building while 36% said it was not necessary. Respondents were evenly split in terms of where the new school should be located. Comparing strong support for the bonding proposal to all opposition resulted in a deficit of 14% at the time of the survey (Morris, 1990).

The Windville School District also did some sampling before the December 13, 1993 special election, but did not use the data in planning for the election. According to the superintendent, "By and large the [survey] information was disregarded. The board did not really use the knowledge." He also said that the board was well aware that there was a negative vote out there in the district from the earlier May special election. "Knowing that reinforced our commitment to go after the 'yes' vote," he said.

Overall, the residents of Windville were quite satisfied with their schools. Even as early as 1990, however, it was evident that the junior high question would be a center of controversy. Should the old building be demolished or renovated? Should the new junior high be on the old site in the city of Windville or move next to the high school campus in Sandstone. The discussion around these questions were at the center of planning and debate before and after the December 1993 special election.

Sponsorship of the Election

The unsuccessful election in May of that year significantly influenced both the contents and timing of the special election in December. The superintendent had recommended in July that the board make a second try in the fall of 1993. Extended discussion and disagreement by the school board, primarily centered on the new middle school, made that schedule unworkable. The superintendent described the atmosphere before and leading up to the December election as "mass confusion." The school board was in turmoil and, according to the superintendent, "...argued about how much should be in the referendum, what should be done, and when it should be done." The administration was concerned about the "Truth-In-Taxation" hearings in December and wanted to conduct the election earlier to avoid that conflict. "I came back with a recommendation that we go for another referendum probably early in October, no later than October 15," said the superintendent. As it turned out, the board did not decide until mid October to conduct a special election and set the date for December 13.

At a meeting on October 4, 1993, the school board considered the special resolution to sponsor the bond election. The recommended ballot included three questions. Question one requested $7.6 million in bonding authority for expansion, remodeling, new equipment, and handicapped and life safety improvements district-wide. Question two proposed $4.1 million in bonding to implement the district's technology plan. The last question asked for $20 million to build and equip a new middle school on the high school campus site. The school board approved the first two questions unanimously. After a board recess, they voted on question three. The motion to approve the junior high question lost on a three to three tie vote with the board chairperson voting "no". A subsequent motion, to discuss question three further and consider it again on October 18, passed by a vote of four to two.

Between the October 4 and October 18 board meetings, some changes were made in all three questions. The bonding proposal in question one was increased from $7.6 to $9.7 million. The technology proposal in question two was cut from $4.1 to $4.0 million. The third proposal to build a new middle school was also reduced by $50,000. Continued disagreement was evident in the board minutes as the motion to approve the three proposals was amended to remove $744,000 in football field improvements from the first question. The amendment failed by a vote of three to two. The initial resolution to approve the ballot and sponsor the special election on December 13 was then approved on a five to one vote. After a recess, another motion was offered to reconsider and rescind the decision to approve the ballot and restate the resolution with the stipulation that the $744,000 in football field improvements in question one be allocated for general site improvements to be determined by the school board. This motion and the subsequent motion to sponsor the election then passed unanimously with one board member not in attendance. A related motion to retain a consultant to assist with the election and do additional survey work also passed, but again on a split vote.

Although the vote to sponsor the election was eventually unanimous, the superintendent had reason to be concerned. The board's difficulty in reaching a decision left only seven weeks between the election resolution and election day. Nothing had been done to organize a campaign or prepare for the election in December.

"The board's decision in October only left a small window," said the superintendent. "No planning had really been done because the board did not come to a decision as to when we would hold the election." The administration also expressed concerns about having the election so close to the property tax hearings. A committee was organized as quickly as possible including many of the same people who had worked on the last bond election in May.

There was also reason to be concerned about the role of the school board during the election campaign. The split votes leading up to sponsorship of the election were signs of deep divisions. Board minutes document propitious recesses before key votes. New motions or amendments were introduced after breaks and often resulted in breaking stalemates. This practice suggested bargaining behind the scenes before the meeting reconvened. When asked about the school board, knowledgeables typically characterized the board as in tumult and split. Ranking the board on a scale of five to one (with five being the most credible), all respondents rated the board at three or below. These included self-evaluations from the school board. A third of the individuals ranked them at two or below. According to the board chair, "We had a good deal of difficulty, some of which was visible, trying to see how to carve up the unsuccessful May proposal." Another board member lamented about the lack of board unity and said, "If you're going to pass one of these things in any community you've got to have all six board members arm in arm. We didn't have that." The superintendent posed a rhetorical question: "The community was asking, how can you move ahead [on the bonding proposal] when the board can't even make up its own mind?"

The bonding proposal itself totaled $33,650,000 and was presented in three questions. About 60% of the money was earmarked to build a new "...student-centered six through eight middle school that is energy efficient and more accessible to all our community." The district's brochure explained in some detail why this was being proposed instead on renovating the old junior high. They also quoted State Department of Education officials who indicated that they "...could not give a favorable recommendation to remodel the junior high." The district-wide technology plan accounted for an additional $4 million. The balance of the money was designated for health and safety projects, expansion, remodeling, and site improvements.

The bond election was conducted on December 13, 1993. Since it was a special election, no other municipality held an election on the same date. The voter turnout was very heavy by district standards and compared to other special elections. About 1,300 more citizens voted in this election than had voted in the special election in May of that year.

Campaign Planning and Organization

The campaign planning in Windville began by contacting many of the individuals who had been active in the May special election. "We talked to all the committee people that had served on the previous committee," said the superintendent, "so that was pretty well in place." In putting together a team, the administration made an effort to broaden representation on the committee. Three co-chairs were recruited representing the key geographic areas within the school district. Two of these three leaders played a more substantial role and one took primary responsibility to organize campaign activities. Central office personnel and some teachers worked directly with the citizen committee to promote passage of the election. An election consultant also assisted the committee early in the campaign. According to a board member, "The consultant provided the district with some ideas related to planning and promotion of the bond election, and we tried to dovetail with the citizen committee."

The superintendent and his staff played a substantial role in the campaign. When asked who was the key person in orchestrating the campaign, the superintendent responded, "It was out of my office. I worked with the 'Yes Committee' on a day-to-day basis, and we were in constant contact with one another." A central office administrator said, "It was my perception that [election coordination] was done jointly between the superintendent, the curriculum director, and myself. The three of us worked together deciding on what those timelines needed to be, and we did gather a lot of information from other districts that had successful campaigns." The superintendent's secretary also played an unusually important role in the campaign. "My secretary was the key communicator in making sure that the literature was getting out," said the superintendent. "She was in charge, through my direction, of preparing all the literature."

Two of the three co-chairs also brought a wealth of experience to the campaign in terms of planning. One of the individuals had worked on both the 1988 and 1993 campaigns. "We actually went back to a referendum that we had in 1988, and we kind of modeled what we did after that," she explained. This framework included committees for canvassing, fund raising, lawn signs, literature (communications), and distribution. Each of the committees was co-chaired by a volunteer and someone from the school district. One of the three volunteer leaders was responsible for coordinating things at the building level which included working with the parent organizations and asking teachers to call parents of children in their classrooms.

One of the three co-chairs emerged as the key leader in the campaign. She had both positive attributes that supported the election effort and liabilities that detracted from her leadership. As a long-time school volunteer and veteran of two previous campaigns, she possessed the knowledge and experience to work effectively with the school board and administration to coordinate a campaign. In the words of the high school principal, "I think there was a very talented lady in Susan Smith. Susan worked very hard, and I think she also worked in close consultation with our district office staff." A prominent person from the city of Windville had a different impression of the leadership on the citizen committee. He complained that the district was being "taken over" by people from the newer parts of the district. He believed that many people from Windville resented dominance on the school board and election committee from people living in more affluent parts of the district.

He also asserted that the district would not meet its facility goals until they dealt with the issues that concerned Windville. "First they took away our high school, and now they want to take away the junior high," he protested.

About forty people ended up working on the election campaign in some capacity. The largest number of volunteers worked on the phones during the canvassing and reminder calls. Canvassing was concentrated on homes containing public school children and pre-schoolers rather than trying to canvass the entire community. According to an administrator, "In the previous referendum we tried to canvass 100% of the homes, but the lists were so bad that we decided to just go with our census lists for school children." A committee was formed to contact pre-school households, but in the words of one of the co-chairs, "I don't believe it ever got off the ground." Overall, the committee felt that it ran a good campaign given the short time to work. "We contacted as many people as we could," said one of the co-chairs. "Even though it didn't come out as we hoped, nonetheless from the planning stage, it was successful."

Role of the School Board

Most school board members were not active in the bond election campaign. Unlike the situation in some school districts, there was no evidence that this was a thoughtful decision, part of an overall strategic plan. By all accounts, two of the six board members were visibly and actively involved helping the campaign committee. The board chair was asked if the board had made a conscious decision to play a limited role behind the scenes. "Oh, I don't know," he said. "I myself was not that close to it [the campaign], but of course I'm a Windville person. I think that this campaign was going to be run by the true believers." In the opinion of the researcher, this was a strange and telling remark, particularly for the chairperson of the school board.

The co-chairs also acknowledged that there was little support coming from the school board. "They did unanimously endorse going forward with the referendum," said one of them, "but not all of the board members actively worked in support of it." Another volunteer described the situation this way: "There were a couple that were really giving of themselves, but others were not involved and I really didn't know how they felt." All of the central office administrators believed that the board's role was detrimental to the campaign. "Even when board members were invited to public meetings they didn't always attend, and I think that was intentional because of their lack of support," asserted one individual. A principal characterized the school board's role as "totally dysfunctional," and a teacher leader described unsubstantiated charges that two of the board members attended "clandestine" meetings and undermined the campaign.

Role of the Superintendent

The superintendent's role in the December bond election was different from the first attempt in May. In the earlier election, the strategic plan for the bond election campaign was developed by the superintendent with some input from other staff. Although the citizen campaign committee was also very involved, it largely implemented the campaign plan designed by administration. It was often the superintendent who was out in front at committee meetings and in public. According to a central office administrator, "The first one was more a textbook election campaign....The second one [in December] was intended, by what I believe, was the board's design to be more low key." The superintendent still attended most committee meetings, but was there as a consultant and did not run the meeting. Presentations in public were also on the basis of invitations rather than assertively trying to get on a group's agenda.

This shift in strategy was based primarily on how the district analyzed the unsuccessful election and May and advice from the election consultant. A central office administrator reflected back on the May election and said, "[s]ome of the things we heard [in May] were that it was the superintendent's issue and not the community's so we tried for more of a low profile [in December]." According to the superintendent, this strategy was consistent with recommendations from the election consultant who encouraged him "...to take a much lower profile." Closely related to this strategy was the attempt "...not to awaken the whole community," as expressed by the superintendent. "A focused effort was to try to get the 'yes' people out."

Even though the superintendent's role was less out in front than the May election, individuals involved with the campaign generally were positive about his contribution. Two of the three co-chairs met with him once a week throughout the campaign to plan and coordinate activities. They also commonly met just before a campaign committee meeting to cover all the bases. One of the co-chairs said, "Meeting with him kind of kept us on our toes so that the committee meetings didn't flounder. We had specific goals and tasks identified and he helped us accomplish them." The superintendent's knowledge and expertise were also recognized and appreciated. "He knows the district better than I do," said a volunteer. "He's in contact with other school districts that have been successful or failed and you need that kind of input." One of the co-chairs asserted that, "The superintendent bent over backwards giving us all the information and support we needed."

The role of the superintendent in the December election was also shaped by the role of the school board. The minority coalition on the board was more outspoken and troublesome in the second election. There was also more public disagreement leading up to and through the second campaign. The increased activity of at least some of the school board members also had the effect of diminishing the role of the superintendent. The high school principal noted that, "The board members had a tendency to take over the public meetings so I'd say the superintendent probably played far less of a role than what he had in May." Commenting on this relationship, a volunteer suggested that, "It's pretty difficult when you have three of them supportive and three of them non-supportive." Four words by the superintendent summarized his diminished role: "I made myself available."

Role of Staff

Windville's staff did not play a very active or significant role in the December bond election. The two co-chairs viewed the impact of staff differently. One commented, "I was really pleased with the teacher involvement on the second campaign [in December]. I felt it was much improved over the first campaign." She went on to talk about their help in canvassing, mailings, letter writing, and raising money. The other co-chair answered the same question about the staff's involvement by saying, "Not a lot." She also described many similar tasks contributed by teachers, but felt it could have been much more. The president of the teachers' association described the role of teachers closer to the second respondent's characterization. "In our district I would say for the most part that our staff is fairly apathetic. They were not optimistic for this referendum because of the failure of the one in May." He described how many of the teachers felt at that time: "Why waste our efforts?" The leadership of the teachers had passed an unanimous resolution in support of the bond election, but that didn't translate into a major contribution of volunteer time. In summary he said, "No, I wouldn't say there was a tremendous amount of involvement."

Election Outcome

The election day arrived on Tuesday, December 13, 1993. The first question passed with 58% of the voters supporting the proposal. The $4,000,000 in requested funding to implement the district's technology program failed by only eleven votes. The third and most important question relating to the new middle school failed by about 900 votes with about 57% of the voters opposing the board's plan. It should be noted that the order of the ballot questions differed from the conventional wisdom of placing the most important (and most expensive) proposal first on the ballot.

Factors Affecting the Outcome of the Election

In the third chapter of this study, I summarized literature relevant to this study. These included non-strategic and strategic factors thought to affect the outcome of bond elections and a closer look at any critical events and the leadership role of the superintendent. In this section of the study, I will revisit these four factors from the perspective of knowledgeables and survey responses.

Non-strategic Factors

A non-strategic factor is a contextual variable that affects the outcome of school bond referenda. Philip Piele categorizes these variables as environmental, socioeconomic, and psychological factors. The economic context of Windville was more affluent than average in 1993, although it was more diverse than many of the suburban communities in the metropolitan area. Nearly half of the respondents reported that they had completed college or had attended graduate school. Fifty-four percent could be characterized as up-scale, white collar households. Although the median income was approximately $50,000, the distribution was bi-modal with almost equal numbers of families below $25,000 and over $62,000. The unusually high number of senior citizens, particularly in the city of Windville, accounted for this profile. The heterogeneous nature of the school district somewhat diminished the contextual value of the economic climate and fostered divergent expectations for services including public education (Morris, 1990).

Some respondents went beyond talking about divergent expectations and characterized the community as divided and dominated by self-interest. One of the election co-chairs talked about this perception within the context of parochial school families living with the school district. "Many people are willing to take care of their own needs," she said, "but many of them will not look beyond that and think about what's best for the community." According to her, most of the private schools had good reputations and many families had a second generation of children attending them. She also asserted that the private schools did not appreciate what they received from the public schools and that, "[t]hey have actively campaigned against our referendums."

The city of Windville itself also presented a difficult context for the election. As mentioned before, Windville was the largest and oldest part of the school district. According to the school district's census, about 4000 residents of the city were over sixty-five years old in 1993. A school board member noted that, "The city of Windville was probably 90% developed in the 1960's." People living within the city tended to be older, less affluent, and had lower expectations of the public school system. Many also had "...a point of vexation that went back about thirty years," according to a board member. At that time the school board moved the senior high school from the site of the current junior high "...smack in the middle of Sandstone." At the time of the move, many people in Windville viewed Sandstone as a "pasture." The board member believed that many of Windville's residents were still resentful about losing the high school. They viewed the proposed new junior high from the point of view of, "What are they doing to take away from us next?"

The age, economics, and history of the population living in Windville were all negative factors facing the school district when it proposed to tear down the existing junior high and build a new one next to the high school in Sandstone. This conclusion can be reinforced by looking at the election results across precincts. Windville was the only area of the school district to reject all three bonding proposals. Regarding the junior high question, the margin of defeat was almost three to one. Sandstone, on the other hand, approved all three of the questions. If Windville's vote tally is removed from the total, the other four precincts would have approved all three questions on the ballot. A weekly newspaper serving the school district underscored the election results by using the headline, "A Tale of Two Cities." The reaction in Sandstone was captured by the headline, "Sandstone Residents Talking About Leaving the District."

The Windville School Board adopted a proposed preliminary levy in September of 1993. The total levy of $30,346,496 was approximately 19.14% higher than the year before and did not include the levy for any of the questions proposed in the December election. The district also had abatements that year and according to an administrator, "Tax statements came out and many reflected a 20% increase....I don't know how many votes we lost, but that was a big one." On the basis of the reaction of citizens and attendance at the district's "Truth-In-Taxation" hearing, property taxes were an issue that affected the outcome of the special election in 1993.

Respondents in the district were also asked to characterize the importance of the bonding proposal's cost on the outcome of the election. This question elicited a variety of responses with a majority who believed that cost was secondary to some other issues. On the basis of the survey work, the district knew that the city of Windville had been identified as particularly tax sensitive. Several individuals also said that cost was a major concern to certain groups and pointed at the city of Windville and the senior population. A teacher commented that, "For the senior citizens it was a big deal, but for the vast majority of other people it was more of a secondary issue." This was echoed by nearly every person involved in the campaign. One of the co-chairs summed it up by saying, "There were a few people who felt that if it was a ten million dollar difference it might be critical, but I don't think so. I think it was all the other issues." Although cost was important, most respondents believed that other issues were more damaging to the campaign.

The election context was also defined by the history of school elections within the district. The Windville School District had not been an easy place to pass special elections. As mentioned earlier in the study, the failed special election in December had been preceded by another unsuccessful bond election in May of the same year. A 1988 excess levy referendum had also failed to win approval of the voters. Although some new schools had been built in the 1960's and 1970's, those elections had also been difficult. Speaking of the high school building, the principal emphasized the problem of passing special elections and said, "The move to build this facility began in 1964 and it took six [special elections] to build it....It's an issue of pride with a lot of people; we'll make do with what we have."

Some of the attitudes of the people were shaped by how the media covered the special election. Respondents in Windville were asked to evaluate the impact of media on the bond election campaign. Most individuals judged the media to be neutral to mildly positive. Two weekly newspapers served the area and the one most read did endorse all three questions on the editorial page. It also printed a series of articles covering the issues surrounding each of the three questions on the ballot. Although these stories also highlighted the objections and issues of some residents, they were generally favorable to the district.

Letters to the editor were dominant in the local newspapers leading up to the special election. Letters of support emphasized the dangerous and deteriorating condition of buildings, crowding, and meeting the needs of students through modern technology and buildings. A little over half of the letters supported the district's position. Those opposed questioned the need for a new school, chastised the board and administration for not taking better care of the existing junior high, protested building the new school in Sandstone instead of in Windville, and raised concerns about cost and taxes. A number of the letters were written by senior citizens from the city of Windville and their criticism focused on poor stewardship of the buildings the district had been given. One senior citizen made the following remark to a campaign worker: "I'll never forget when that school [the old junior high] was built because it was the same year I built my new garage. I wouldn't think of tearing down my new garage."

Both district officials and campaign workers identified the weekly newspapers as the medium used by most people to get information and form their opinions. "Some people say that you could predict the outcome of elections by counting the number of letters in the weekly newspaper," said one long-time resident. The campaign was quite aggressive and used a variety of media in the special election. "We used video, print media, mailers, flyers, cable television, and just about everything we could think of," said a principal. Prior to the December election, the superintendent had surveyed schools that had run successful campaigns. "I think by in large we used all the key elements that most school districts had used. We tried not to be blind to what had to be done." Unfortunately, some of the media coverage hadn't been blind to rankling on the school board either.

Several respondents mentioned that damage had been done in the newspaper in the months leading up to the election with the school board's disagreements of most concern. Media coverage of some discipline problems at the high school, losing a popular hockey coach, and coverage of the "Truth-In-Taxation" hearings were also mentioned. Some of the negative coverage came from the custodial staff who feared layoffs if a campus plan was developed. Criticism also came from retired employees including a custodial engineer and assistant superintendent. Both focused primarily on poor planning, maintenance, and waste. In summary, media coverage was fairly broad, balanced, and brought both assets and problems to the campaign.

The presence of organized opposition in bond election campaigns is recognized as a predictive variable for failure and frequently is present in combination with split boards. Opposition in Windville came from many directions in December of 1993, but fell short of what most respondents were willing to characterize as organized opposition. One of the principals thought there was some organization to the opposition. He talked about "...an organized letter to the editor campaign, flyers distributed in local churches, and some neighborhood meetings." A teacher also talked about senior citizens organizing, attending school board meetings, and doing some calling. Neither the superintendent nor the two co-chairs, however, believed that efforts to defeat the election were really organized. Board members interviewed agreed with this assessment.

One committee volunteer was quite certain that organized opposition was not present in the December election. "Not at all," she said. "I think they didn't feel that they had to organize. I think they felt that it was the same bond issue they'd tried before [and lost]." When asked if a leader had emerged from the opposition to organize resistance to the bond election, she replied, "Not at all. I know that for a fact." The two most active volunteers pointed to the city of Windville and senior citizens when talking about opposition, but didn't feel it was very well organized. They acknowledged some opposition in other parts of the district, but characterized it as more sporadic in nature with some parents expressing concerns about locating a middle school next to a high school.

The school district was also challenged about the proposed bonding for technology. Some residents objected to twenty year bonding for equipment that had a much shorter usable life. This concern could have been the difference between victory and defeat on that question, but no one felt it was significant in the defeat of the new middle school.

In summary, the election context was complex and challenging going into the December special election. Although relatively affluent overall, the history of other special elections in the district produced more losing efforts than success. Windville had lost a bond election just seven months earlier. Lack of school board unity and difficulty making decisions resulted in a rushed campaign and inadequate time to plan and prepare. Differences among the school board members also produced some negative media attention that detracted from the committee's efforts. The largest city in the school district contained the most opposition and was least able to afford the proposed improvements. Many residents of the city of Windville were also deeply concerned about losing the only secondary school located in the community. Social concerns about locating a middle school next to a high school and the financing approach for technology added to the problems facing the district. Criticism from some current and retired employees also exacerbated an already unstable situation. Overall, the context for the December special election was difficult at best.

Strategic Factors

For the purposes of this study, a strategic factor was defined as one element of the set of various methods selected and designed to form a plan to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. In evaluating this case study, it was important to understand to what extent Windville used research-based strategies and which of these strategies were believed to be most important in the outcome of the election. Thirty-eight strategic factors were identified in the literature and presented to knowledgeable respondents in the form of a survey. Individuals close to the study were first asked to identify which of these strategies were used and the relative importance of each in Windville's special election. Knowledgeables also rated the relative importance of each strategy.

Thirty out of thirty-eight (80%) of the election strategies were used in the Windville campaign. Strategies not used in the special election included the following:

1. Made a conscious decision to set the date of the election for a specific week or month in order to gain an edge in the campaign

2. Made campaign committee assignments to canvass citizens within the school district
3. Demonstrated responsiveness to the opposition, diffused their platform, gained their support by modifying the referendum, incorporated their ideas
4. Identified and provided transportation to potential voters who required transportation to the polls
5. Arrived at a decision to sponsor a bond election at least three months prior to the election
6. Secured city council(s) endorsement for the bond election
7. Communications strategies were tailored to different audiences
8. Recruited the senior citizen vote or involved them in the campaign

Respondents also rated the relative importance of the thirty-eight strategies by completing a survey and listing what they believed to be the most important strategies affecting the outcome of this election. A five point Likert scale was used ranging from "essential" (5) to "not important" (1). Rating from individuals were averaged using arithmetic means to rank the significance of each strategy from most important to the outcome of Windville's 1993 bond election to least important. The following strategies obtained an average score of at least 4.5 on a 5.0 scale:

1. Obtained a unanimous vote from all members of the school board to sponsor a bond election (5.0)
2. School district provided information and in-service to citizens working on bond election campaign (4.875)
3. Identified the probable "yes" voter (4.875)
4. Communication efforts focused on establishing a legitimate need (4.875)
5. Used "Get Out The Vote" reminder calls to all identified supporters (4.875)
6. Encouraged citizen participation in the school district by giving citizens the opportunity to become involved (4.75)
7. Focused on program need/maintenance (4.75)
8. Superintendent actively involved in the campaign (4.75)
9. Use more than one media to convey the referendum message (4.625)
10. Focused the electorate's attention on the benefits which accrue to students from proposed improvements (4.625)
11. Established a citizen committee to involve the public in organizing and implementing election activities (4.625)
12. Campaign literature developed and distributed by committee (4.625)
13. Secured support from local newspapers via positive editorials and news coverage of the bond election proposal (4.5)
14. Conducted a district-wide program of public relations about the school district throughout the year (4.5)

Individuals involved in the campaign also responded to two open-ended questions related to election strategies. The first question asked them to identify the five most important strategies contained in the survey instrument. Only one of the thirty-eight strategies was nominated by at least half of the respondents:

1. Identified probable "yes" voter (4 out of 8)

It is interesting to note that the open-ended response above did correspond to a strategy that obtained one of the highest average values. Perhaps more interesting is that the respondents in the Windville sample established two patterns that were different from the other cases. First, they ranked the largest number of strategies at a value of 4.5 or higher indicating a good understanding of the importance and power of bond election strategies. In the open-ended responses, however, there was little agreement on which five of the thirty-eight strategies were most important, with only one strategy mentioned by at least half of the respondents. Twenty-seven of the thirty-eight strategies were nominated as one of the top five by at least one individual, but only two of the strategies received more than two votes. There was obviously a good deal of disagreement about what was most important.

Individuals involved in the campaign were also asked to identify strategies that they thought were important to the outcome of the election that were not included in the list of thirty-eight in the survey. The following two strategies were mentioned by at least one person:

1. "Door-to-door" contacts in the southern part of the district on the Saturday before the election generated interest and support
2. Focus attention on residents of the district who do not have children in the school

Interestingly, two of the respondents mentioned the school board in this open-ended response even though they were only supposed to nominate strategies not contained in the list. One noted the importance of board members actively supporting the committee and the other replied, "Board members publicly supported the referendum, but privately worked against it." These two comments support concerns about the school board reviewed in this study.

Overall, Windville conducted a fairly strategic campaign using 80% of the identified strategies in their campaign. Even though many of the strategies were used effectively, other decisions worked against the campaign. Despite an unanimous vote on the election resolution, lack of school board solidarity before and during the campaign detracted from the strategic efforts of the election committee. Choosing not to respond to the objections of the constituents in the city of Windville also resulted in a precarious situation from the beginning. Canvassing was generally limited to households with school-age children and not as effective as the committee would have hoped. The selection of the election date by the school board was also a strategic decision that worked to the disadvantage of the campaign. The date was too close to the "Truth-

In-Taxation" notices in a year of double-digit property tax increases.

Critical Incidents

A critical incident is an unplanned, unexpected event occurring within a relatively close period before the vote that affects the use of strategic factors, non-strategic factors, and the outcome of the election. Individuals involved in the campaign were asked to consider whether any such incidents occurred and, if so, what effect they had on the use of strategies and the outcome of the election.

The "Truth-In-Taxation" notices and hearing were two issues that were mentioned separately by five individuals when asked about unplanned, critical incidents affecting the outcome of the election. Based on the comments from knowledgeables involved in the election, it definitely qualified as critical. Whether or not it was unplanned was another question.

In preparing its preliminary levy for proposed property taxes payable in 1994, the school board included a levy for a variety of health and safety projects either required or recommended by state inspectors. Their intent was to make a corresponding cut in the final levy if the bond election passed and finance most of the projects over twenty years. Not knowing if the election would pass, however, the board included the cost of the projects in the preliminary levy. According to a district administrator, "We had to do the health and safety issues that related to fire marshal correction....So we put them on the health and safety levy which really increased their property tax statements." The same individual stated that she wasn't sure it was unexpected, though. The district was aware when the election date was set that the notices would probably go out shortly before the election. What was not fully known was exactly when the people would receive the notices and how negative the reaction would be.

Proposed property taxes payable in 1994 ended up to be an explosive issue in many board rooms across the metropolitan area. A headline in the St. Paul Pioneer Press was typical of how taxpayers reacted and how the media portrayed the hearings: "Truths on taxes get booed." The subheading read, "Metro officials blasted at meeting." Windville's hearing was conducted eleven days before the special election date and was typical of many others in December of 1993. District officials estimated about 250 in attendance at the hearing. According to the superintendent, "It was a bad time. The tax notices came out and the increases that people were receiving had a negative effect on the voters." Residents of the Windville School District were looking at increases in excess of 12% without the additional impact of the proposed bond election. The issue of bonding for twenty years for technology also was criticized at the hearing. The negative momentum caused by residents receiving the tax notices within ten days of the election was perceived to be a critical and an unplanned problem for the district.

Leadership Style and Role of Superintendent

The leadership style and role of the superintendent was one of the important research questions focused on in this study. In addition to open-ended questions investigating this variable, respondents were also asked to label the superintendent's predominant leadership style using a conceptual model developed by Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal (1991). This model was discussed in the literature revue and describes leadership behavior in four categories. Individuals closely involved with the bond election were asked to identify which of the four descriptions best described the leadership role of their interim superintendent in the 1993 bond election.

A resounding eight out of eleven respondents selected Structural as the predominant leadership characteristic of the superintendent. This dimension of leadership focuses on planning, organizing, setting goals, and implementing procedures. There is an emphasis on role clarification, systems, structures, and analyses. Most of the respondents identified this characteristic quickly as compared to other case studies. One of the principal's commented, "There's no doubt, it's structural. I don't think there's any doubt about that." The superintendent, however, selected Human Resource as his predominant style. Political was nominated by one of the central office administrators and also by a community resident most critical of the school board and administration.

Individuals were also asked to identify the characteristic least like the superintendent. Unlike the first question, respondents split almost evenly among three profiles. Four individuals selected Political and four nominated Symbolic. Three of the people picked Human Resource. Based on the comments of all the respondents, it was apparent that the predominant style was quite obvious to nearly everyone. Identifying the profile least like the superintendent was more difficult. The three characteristics selected manifested themselves in a variety of ways with none being dominant or ever present. There was also lack of agreement between the two board members, the three co-chairs, and district staff.

Three related questions investigated the importance and role of the superintendent in the bond election. Respondents were first asked to describe how important it was during a bond election for the superintendent to have a positive relationship with the school board, staff, and community. A second question asked individuals to describe and evaluate those relationships at the time of the special election. A third interview question investigated how important the superintendent was to the outcome of the election.

Everyone knowledgeable about the campaign believed that a good relationship between the superintendent, school board, and staff was very important. The superintendent himself responded by saying, "Well, it is paramount." Other respondents used words like essential, critical, and very helpful. Only the superintendent's relationship with staff was universally characterized as positive and healthy. The president of the teachers' association commented that, "Most of our staff had a great deal of respect for the superintendent. He's a man of action, he has plans, he has goals, he has ideas, and you know he wants to do things for the betterment of education." Board members and district staff also perceived the relationship between the superintendent and the professional staff as mostly positive. There was some indication that it was not as positive with the custodial and paraprofessional staff.

The superintendent's relationship with the school board and community, however, was polarized and split. The board election in May of 1993 resulted in changes that were detrimental to the relationship. Commenting on this change, the superintendent himself said, "Prior to the new board coming on July 1, we probably had a much stronger relationship. After July 1, there was considerable deterioration." During the months leading up to the special election, the superintendent's interim status was an issue that fermented behind the scenes. He certainly had the support from the staff and apparently from half of the school board. There was sharp division, however, whether to name him the permanent superintendent or open the position. There was also disagreement on the timing of this decision in relationship to the date of the special election. One board member asserted that, "I think the board sent a real bad message [to the community] when we were undecided about the superintendent and put off that decision until January." Another board member said that he believed the board should never have talked about the superintendent's position until after the election to "...avoid any needless appearance of division as to the long-term leadership questions."

The superintendent's relationship with the community also got mixed reviews through the eyes and ears of those closest to the election. Many who were critical of the superintendent cast him in the same lot as the former superintendent. The former superintendent had recruited him from the same district where the two of them had previously worked together. The former superintendent left the district amid some controversy and a less than positive relationship with the school board. An influential resident from the city of Windville charged that, "As far as the administration goes, I think they lost a lot of credibility in the last few years. He was brought in here by the former superintendent, and the buildings really deteriorated--maybe on purpose." Many of the informants described the superintendent's relationship with the community as evenly mixed, fairly similar to the disagreement about the location of the middle school that tended to split the community north and south. "The battles were raging in our communities," said a teacher. "There's a great deal of divisiveness in the district."

School board members, staff, volunteers, and community members also described to what extent they believed the superintendent's role affected the outcome of the election. One of the board members described the superintendent's role as "...a critical piece" and felt that he did as well as could be expected given the unstable situation on the school board and the tax climate. The other board member was more reserved in his assessment and felt that the superintendent had actually been more effective in the May election. The responses from the three co-chairs were very interesting. They ranged from, "I don't think he could have done anything more" to "I don't think he made a difference one way or the other." For at least two of the three, this meant that he did the best he could given a bad situation. One went on to say that, "With the school board that we've been dealing with for the last few years, the superintendent has kind of been in the background." Another co-chair was more direct in her assessment: "No, I think it [the superintendent's role] was insignificant." Staff members universally felt that the superintendent's efforts were the only thing that prevented a landslide in the wrong direction. The superintendent himself said, "I think the superintendent can play a large role. I think that I was at somewhat of a disadvantage because I'm an interim superintendent."

Summary of the Windville Case

Two of the three bonding proposals in Windville failed for a variety of contextual and strategic reasons. The election was also affected by a critical incident occurring within the last two weeks. The district and community worked together on a moderately effective campaign, given the problems the committee faced and the short time available to work.

A variety of contextual issues were problematic going into the special election in 1993. Although the school district's property value per pupil was very high by metropolitan standards, the communities within the district were starkly heterogeneous and sharply divided. The largest population base within the school district was the city of Windville which had an unusually high percentage of senior citizens and a low socioeconomic base. This contrasted from developing areas primarily on the southern end of the district that were predominantly affluent with mostly professional occupations. This profile set up a pattern of conflict and divergent expectations that shaped the nature of the special election. Some community conflict also carried over from the previous superintendent's tenure and colored the perception of the board and administration.

The context for the bond election was also defined by the history of special elections within the school district. A similar bond election in May of that year had also been defeated by substantial numbers. An operating levy in 1988 had received an unfavorable reception from district voters. A high school built in the 1970's was completed only after multiple attempts to pass a bond election. Controversy about the location of the new middle school and the fate of the existing junior high in the city of Windville carried over from the last election. The school board did not make any accommodations to this opposition between the May and December elections and basically came back with the same plan.

The leadership and role of the school board and superintendent were complex and mostly harmful to the campaign. Leadership of the school board turned over in July following the May elections. Two new members were added to the board which further strained the relationship between the school board and superintendent. An interim superintendent, who formerly had served many years as an assistant superintendent in the district, was in a state of limbo. Indecision by the school board about whether to open the position or make the interim superintendent permanent raised questions in the community and on the staff. The school board also had difficulty deciding on the date and contents of the special election and didn't make a final decision until about seven weeks before the vote. The time set for the election was contrary to recommendations of the superintendent who wanted the election in September.

The campaign itself was fairly strategic in nature employing most of the strategic initiatives identified in the literature. The shortness of time resulted in a scramble to get things done, however, and canvassing was not executed to the extent necessary to give the district any chance of being successful. The campaign was also marred by a variety of negative distractions. The involvement and support by school board members were starkly variable with two of them working very hard and at least two hurting the campaign in direct and subtle ways. A few employees, concerned about layoffs with a secondary campus plan, criticized the school board and administration. A retired assistant superintendent and custodial engineer joined the chorus with charges of mismanagement and waste.

If there was a final straw that broke the back of the campaign, it came in the form of property tax notices and the "Truth-In-Taxation" hearing that occurred eleven days before the election. A bad situation across the metropolitan area was exacerbated by the board's decision in include a health and safety levy in the taxes payable in 1994 as a hedge against the special election losing. Had the election been successful, the levy would have been reduced and the projects would have been financed from the bond proceeds. Property tax increases from 12-20% were common and about 250 people jammed the district offices when the hearing was conducted. This was also the time that the school board heard complaints about what some residents characterized as the folly of financing technology with twenty year bonds. The local media covered the property tax issue aggressively which resulted in daily reminders for district residents. The additional taxes necessary to finance the proposed new debt would have been in addition to the increases already reflected in the property tax notices.

The conclusion of the researcher was that the contextual and strategic variables, in combination with critical events in the school district, resulted in an election that could not be won. The superintendent, staff, and referendum co-chairs ran a relatively effective campaign given the constraints of time and circumstances. A minority of the school board made concerted efforts to support the campaign. The solution to the school district's building needs would have to wait for another day. A successful campaign would require more unified leadership, accommodations to the city of Windville's concerns, and a solution to the junior high question.

CHAPTER VII

CASE STUDY FOUR: CHARLESVILLE

Setting

The Charlesville Public Schools takes its name from the largest and oldest city located within the school district. Three other cites are located totally or partially within its boundaries. The school district is situated on the edge of the metropolitan area within thirty minutes of the downtown areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The city of Charlesville itself was at one time a small town, separated from the greater metropolitan area by farms and open country. Parts of the district still have a rural character with many attractive areas for housing. Over the years, urban sprawl has filled in much of the open space with typically suburban housing and commercial development. Abundant lake and park areas provide an unusually beautiful area in which to live. Commerce and shopping are available in the city of Charlesville as well as scattered throughout newly developed areas. A large retail shopping mall is also located within twenty minutes of the school district.

Approximately 24,000 people lived within the school district at the time of the bond election in 1993. A variety of housing was available, ranging from modest homes primarily in the older sections of the city of Charlesville to literally hundreds of newly built homes in the last ten years. Many of the properties were middle to upper-middle class homes in attractive residential areas. A significant amount of light commercial development was also present within the school district. Because of a growing student body and significant areas of the district still undeveloped, the property value per pupil in 1993 was about 18% less than the state average. The other three school districts in the county were even more rural in their makeup. Although Charlesville included second and third generation families, the largest percentage of residents had moved there in the last ten years. At the time of the election, about 4% of the residents were senior citizens which was considerably below the metropolitan average of 10.4 percent.

The Charlesville Public Schools served 4,656 students in kindergarten through grade twelve in 1993, which was somewhat smaller than average in the metropolitan area. Students were organized into a primary building, four elementary schools, a middle school serving grades six through eight, and a high school. The administrative offices were also located in the same facility as the primary grades. The number of professional and classified staff totaled 414.66 at the time of the election which placed Charlesville's professional staff to pupil ratio approximately 1.5 higher than the state average in 1992-93 (MDE, "School District Profiles," 1993).

School-age children were present in about 34% of the households during the 1992-93 school year. Elementary enrollments (K-6) were about 1000 higher than the numbers in the secondary schools at the time of the election. This foreshadowed a continued trend of substantial growth through the end of the decade. From a racial point of view, the school district was very homogeneous in 1993 with only 3.3% of the student body minority. Three private schools were located within the boundaries of the district serving about 10% of the eligible students. This figure was lower than the average within the metropolitan area. The financial health of Charlesville was fair in 1993 with a small, positive balance in the operating funds. The district's fund balance per pupil was somewhat below state and country averages. In terms of spending per pupil, the district was about 4% below the average within the state and about at the average within the county (MDE, "School District Profiles," 1993).

In 1993 the Charlesville Public Schools was governed by a seven member board composed of four men and three women. The school board was fairly mature in terms of experience with an average length of service of about four years. The range of service was from one to seven years. The superintendent was still quite new at the time of the election completing his third year of work in Charlesville at the time of the election. He had previously served as an assistant superintendent in a larger suburban school district where he had worked on other election campaigns.

Charlesville had conducted three other school finance elections in the five year period preceding the 1993 bond election. Two operating levies and one bond election were approved by substantial numbers. The closest of these elections was successful by a winning margin of about two to one. The district's historical success with special elections was an asset going into the campaign.

Pre-election Survey

The Charlesville school board contracted with a professional polling firm and conducted a community survey in December of 1992, about three months before the March special election. Four-hundred randomly selected adults responded to questions about the school district. The overall approval rating found that 67% of the district residents rated the quality of education in Charlesville as either excellent or good. Nine percent characterized the schools as fair or poor. The researcher noted with some surprise that approximately 25% either did not know or had no opinion. Respondents believed that crowding was the most serious issue facing the district.

Several questions sought to quantify reactions to how the school board handled its fiduciary responsibilities. By more than a two to one margin, residents believed that school district officials spent tax money effectively and efficiently. The survey also characterized the school board as "financially prudent" in its use of property taxes. The survey did not inquire specifically about the job performance of the school board or superintendent.

Residents responded to a number of questions related to a potential bond election. Reaction to a new high school drew support from 45% of those surveyed while 46% opposed the plan. Comparing the percentage of strong support to all opposition resulted in a deficit of 35% at the time of the survey. A new elementary school was supported by 49% and opposed by 41% of the residents. The deficit on this proposal was 31% comparing strong support to all opposition. Funding for technology and life and safety projects received overwhelming support by residents. The community's lack of knowledge about growth and crowding and what the researcher characterized as a "mildly hostile" tax environment, were largely responsible for the less than enthusiastic response to the new high school and elementary building. Between twenty-five and thirty percent of the respondents thought crowding was a problem to be reckoned with in the future rather than a current issue requiring immediate action.

Overall, the residents of Charlesville were moderately satisfied with their schools, although the survey results "...ranked them below the norm for school districts surveyed across Minnesota" (Morris, 1992). The tax climate was mildly hostile and a surprising number of residents had not internalized the relationship between extensive development, growing enrollments, and the need to replace buildings and expand. Support for technology improvements and health and safety repairs were strong. Comparing all opposition to strong support for the two new buildings left much work to be done by the district before election day (Morris, 1992).

A follow-up tracking survey was conducted about six weeks later. Surprisingly, two-thirds of the respondents still said they were unaware that a school district bond election was coming soon. The general reaction to a proposal had improved somewhat, however, with 46% favoring and 22% opposing. Thirty-two percent of the individuals surveyed were undecided or refused to respond. Although the numbers had improved, it was obvious that an aggressive information campaign was still needed (Morris, 1993).

Sponsorship of the Election

The bond election in Charlesville was preceded by significant pre-election planning. The district appointed a facility task force in November of 1991. The committee included individuals from the school district and community. Also represented were administrators and planners from the county and cities represented within the school district. Two school board members also served on the committee. The forty member task force was facilitated by the district's architects who had previously completed a facility evaluation. The school district had also completed a demographic and enrollment study and the data from that were available to the task force. The facility task force eventually made a recommendation to the school board in June of 1992 calling for a bond election in Charlesville to provide new and improved school facilities.

The school board unanimously passed a resolution on February 4, 1993, to sponsor a bond election on March 30, 1993. Board action came just under eight weeks before the date of the special election. The timing of the election was interesting because the school board originally had intended to conduct the election earlier in 1993. Even though the school district believed that it had been getting the message out for many months, the survey data revealed that the community was generally not aware of the extent of growth within the district and the immediate need for new and expanded facilities. According to one of the district administrators assigned to coordinate the special election, "We had a core group on the facility task force aware of the need. What we didn't have was a lot of community awareness among the population in general." The two month delay gave the district and the election committee time to communicate the message with a more urgent theme.

The pre-election survey affected the timing of the election, but had little influence on the content or structure of the ballot. With the support of the facility task force, the board eventually decided to move forward with the entire plan in the face of data that were challenging at best. The bonding proposal itself totaled $46,500,000 and was placed on the ballot in one question. Reflecting on the size of the proposal, a central office administrator said that the school board never seriously consider reducing the package. "We needed this for children," she said, "and we just decided to get going." A new high school and elementary building were the key components of the proposal. Also included were remodeling to the existing high school to convert it to a middle school, remodeling throughout the district, and implementation of the district's technology plan. Safety and accessibility improvements were also included in the plan.

The bond election was conducted on Tuesday, March 30. The special election had been delayed almost three months to provide the district and campaign committee with the additional time they needed to demonstrate a legitimate need and communicate the message more assertively within the community. There were no other elections conducted on the same date or issues competing for the voters' attention.

Campaign Planning and Organization

One of the most important advantages in the Charlesville bond election was the work and preparation that preceded the actual campaign. As mentioned previously, the district had involved a broad-based group of citizens and staff on a facility task force. This strategy broadened the awareness of the district's needs within the community and developed a core group of citizens ready to move into the next stage of the campaign. "We had excellent coverage of our long-range facility study," said an administrator. "A local reporter was at every meeting and there were large articles in the paper following each meeting." Charlesville had also completed a extensive demographic and enrollment study in preparation for the special election that provided the district with accurate and up-to-date data.

The bond election campaign started off with fanfare and enthusiasm as school board members, staff, and parents gathered at one of the elementary schools for a rally. This symbolic activity was replete with music, balloons, speeches, and solicitations for money to run the campaign. One of the central office administrators assigned to the campaign commented that, "The school board was there and they all wore T-shirts. When they stood together it spelled out VOTE YES!" Co-chairs of the campaign spoke to the group and individuals were encouraged to sign up to work on committees. School officials estimated about 75 people in attendance for this kickoff event.

Four citizens were recruited to co-chair the special election effort. One individual was selected to represent each of the four communities within the school district. Specific people were recruited who were well-known and had respect within their city. "We helped to recruit them and we worked very much in tandem," said a Charlesville administrator. "We were at every meeting." This assessment was from one of three district-level administrators assigned to plan and coordinate the campaign. Teachers and other staff members also worked on the committee composed of "...opinion leaders, parent leaders, and people who understood the stakes and would be good advocates for our cause." Committees included canvassing, communications, fund-raising, and get-out-the-vote. One of the co-chairs asserted, "This was the most motivated, self-driven group of individuals that I've ever worked with and there was no worry about things getting done."

Role of the School Board

The role of the school board was primarily behind the scenes rather than on the front line and involved in the day-to-day activities. Unlike some other school districts, this approach was not criticized or second-guessed by those directly involved in the campaign. One of the co-chairs reflected, "We really didn't have a lot of contact with school board members. I don't mean to imply that they didn't help us, but I think it was a lot more behind the scenes." Two of the board members explained their role in similar ways. One commented, "We were an informative body. It was our belief that we had to keep somewhat at arm's length from the transaction." Another board member explained, "I did not get involved personally with the planning committee because of being an elected official. I felt that is was better to keep my separation."

The role the school board chose to play in this election appeared to work within the context of the overall plan. Both staff and parents working on the campaign expressed complete confidence that the board members were unified and supported the committee's efforts in many ways. A central office administrator asserted, "They were completely on board with the effort and took every opportunity to publicly address the issues and the need for doing it [the bond election]. This included many public meetings and presentations within the community. They were always ready to be called on when they were needed."

Role of the Superintendent

The superintendent's role in the Charlesville election was somewhat different from the other three school districts analyzed in this study. It was also more difficult to characterize than the other campaigns in that the superintendent was deeply involved in some respects, and in other ways worked behind the scenes. On the basis of comments from knowledgeables, the superintendent cast himself in a role that was appropriate and effective.

The most obvious difference between the superintendent's role in the Charlesville election and the other case studies, was the level of expertise internal to the district and the extent to which the superintendent delegated planning and coordination of the election. Three central office administrators were given responsibility to plan and coordinate the district's campaign activities and to work with the citizen committee supporting the election. It was the Community Relations Coordinator, the Director of Instruction, and the Director of Community Education who were assigned this responsibility. Interestingly, there was marked disagreement among respondents about who among the three was in charge of the campaign. This suggested that they all worked effectively in a variety of ways. A strength of the superintendent was his ability to recognize talent and have the confidence to delegate much of the planning to these three staff members. One of the tri-chairs recognized this asset and remarked, "He knows when to let other people carry the message, and he knows when he needs to carry the message, and he's comfortable both ways."

The superintendent characterized his role in the campaign as "...doing a lot of monitoring and adjusting." He met with his in-house team regularly, but did not participate in all of their planning meetings. In his words, he attended "...several of the citizen committee meetings but was not present at all of them and did not play a major role in the day-to-day decision-making." The superintendent described one of his primary responsibilities to "...lay a lot of groundwork for support with the business community." Key businesses, including the school district's largest employer, actively supported the bond election. The superintendent cultivated support where he could and "...neutralized any business opposition where possible." He also was very active as a speaker to a variety of groups and emphasized the school district's need for the bonding proposal. According to one of the tri-chairs, "We relied on him to be a spokesperson for the school district. He was out and about an awful lot carrying our message to people." A former board member summarized his changing role the best: "It was a behind-the-scenes, supportive role with high points of visibility at the appropriate times."

The Charlesville case study was an excellent example of what can be done to build a foundation for success long before the school board considers a resolution for a bond election. One element of that foundation came in the form of developing a good relationship with the four cities represented within the school district as well as the county. The superintendent had taken the initiative to develop a planning group of government leaders well before the bond election. In his words, "We have a really well organized leadership group that met just about monthly. We worked on a variety of issues from community values to transportation." One of the outcomes of this work was a coordinated schedule of bonding and operating initiatives so that all levels of government were not asking voters for funding at the same time. When the Charlesville school board was ready to move forward on its special election, some of the other officials "winced" (in the superintendent's words) at the size of the bonding proposal, but did come through with unified support.

The superintendent also played an important role when it came time to decide when to hold the election. Both overcrowding in the district's schools and future enrollment projections encouraged moving forward as soon as possible. The survey results mentioned earlier, however, suggested that the community at large had not internalized the scope or immediacy of the problem. Staying with the original plan for an earlier election would probably have jeopardized the election and turned a resounding success into a close contest. Survey results, in fact, predicted a defeat had the special election been held ten weeks earlier. It was important for the superintendent to show both composure and patience in delaying the bond election until the end of March. The school district's public relations campaign was successful in changing perceptions and used the additional time to great advantage.

Role of the Staff

All respondents characterized the role and support of the teachers as positive. Teachers were represented on the citizen committee and participated in the planning and coordination of the campaign effort. One of the quad chairs of the citizen group commented that, "Teachers were involved in all levels of the campaign and some wore more than one hat." The president of the Charlesville Education Association estimated that about fifty of the teachers were significantly involved on a continual basis, and additional staff participated near the end when the committee needed literature distributed and for the get-out-the-vote reminder calls. The Charlesville Education Association was also involved in some of the symbolic activities including the kick off rally at which they donated $500 to the campaign. Early childhood teachers also helped to get the message out to younger families. Overall, teachers played a moderate role in the bond election and were perceived positively by both district staff and parents working on the campaign.

Election Outcome

The election day was Tuesday, March 30, 1993. The questions passed by almost a three to one margin, a landslide of support by bond election standards. District officials estimated the voter turnout at about 35% which was higher than average compared to other recent special elections in their district.

Factors Affecting the Outcome of the Election

In the third chapter of this study, I summarized literature relevant to this study. This included non-strategic and strategic factors thought to affect the outcome of bond elections and a closer look at any critical events and the leadership role of the superintendent. In this section of the study, I will revisit these four factors from the perspective of knowledgeables and survey responses.

Non-strategic Factors

A non-strategic factor is a contextual variable that affects the outcome of school bond referenda. Philip Piele categorized these variables as environmental, socioeconomic, and psychological. The economic context of Charlesville was above average in both wealth and education level of its residents. Many of Charlesville's residents were professional families who commuted into the metropolitan area for work. Over half of the residents came from up-scale white collar households and approximately one-third had students attending the public school system. Only 31% of the respondents reported that their household income was less than $50,000. Forty-five percent said it was over $50,000 while 24% refused to provide this information. Forty-four percent of the residents said that they had finished college or attended graduate school. The community profile of Charlesville was an asset going into the election (Morris, 1992).

The Charlesville School Board adopted a proposed preliminary tax levy in September of 1992, about six months before the election. The total levy of $9,774,332 was approximately 3.4% lower than the year before and did not include the levy for the bond election that eventually passed in March of 1993. The Truth-In-Taxation hearing was attended by only approximately twenty residents, and the superintendent characterized the decreased tax burden as "a positive" going into the election campaign.

Respondents were also asked to characterize the importance of the bonding proposal's cost and the related tax implications. Both the size of the issue and the tax impact were significant concerns within the community and something that had to be planned for in the campaign. A former school board member commented, "It was the largest bond issue ever to be put forth in this community. There was anxiety about whether or not the number itself would be an impediment. It was a big number no matter how you looked at it." The superintendent reinforced this perspective and noted, "At the time this passed, there was only one larger bonding proposal that had passed in the metropolitan area." One of the major thrusts of the communication plan was to make sure that residents realized what they were getting for the money and, according to the superintendent, "...that the school district was not building Cadillacs." One of the three staff members coordinating the election also noted that the district made a concerted effort to make sure that all the schools got something positive including new technology so that people didn't believe that all the money was going for the high school.

In terms of tax implications, the tax impact of the average home was about fifty dollars higher than what the polling firm had identified as the threshold of comfort for residents. "We worked hard to break things down to understandable numbers," said a district administrator. "Two Big Macs a week, or something like that, to give it some perspective." Some of the tax bite was offset by rebates from cities within the school district that had excess funds in tax increment financing districts. According to a school board member, "We talked about the financial implications within the context of our growth and the need for new space."

The election context was also defined by the history of school elections within the district. Two successful operating levies had passed with strong support in 1988 and 1989. The district also conducted a successful bond election in 1989. The age, education, and income level of the growing school district also provided a healthy climate for the 1993 bond election.

Respondents were also asked to expand on the unique nature of Charlesville and describe characteristics that might have affected the outcome of the election. The first characteristic mentioned with some frequency was the rapid growth and changing nature of the area. The president of the teachers' association drew an interesting contrast to make this point by describing a small, local supermarket run by the same two people for nearly a lifetime. They represented the historical, small town nature of Charlesville. In contrast he described $250,000, $500,000 and $1,000,000 homes being built by newcomers on farm land. One of the administrators coordinating the district's campaign described "...a growing realization within the community that this isn't 'Little House on the Prairie' anymore. We're got city traffic on county roads." A former school board member characterized this growth as an asset in the bond election and said, "There are more and more people who have a vested interest in the future of the schools in this community and not just the historical past."

A second characteristic of Charlesville is common within suburban areas, but was particularly important in the 1993 bond election. As discussed earlier, the school district is made up of four distinct communities. Two of the four are completely within the boundaries of the Charlesville School District. A third community is very small and mostly within the district. It is the fourth city that shaped the political context and affected both facility and bond election planning. Students living in the fourth city were split among three school districts. It was also the area of the district that was experiencing the greatest growth both in new homes and commercial development. One of the district's tri-chairs commented, "It was a thorn in their side that we ever called this the Charlesville School District." Another administrator noted that a suggestion to secede and form their own, independent school district was the first comment on the district's bond election hot line. From a strategic point of view, the district countered this problem by selecting a prominent person from this community to serve on the election committee and by making sure that the district's investment included significant improvements in this area.

A third characteristic mentioned by a number of respondents was the positive way that the community had responded to educational needs in the past. As discussed earlier, all three special elections in the previous five years had passed by substantial margins. Even though the area was described as financially conservative, these same conservative values included a deep appreciation for the importance of education as an investment in the future. "People in this community generally value education," said a former school board member. "They believe education is important and see the schools in a positive light." The superintendent emphasized this theme in explaining that you could gain the community's support as long as you gave them the information and were honest and reasonable in your request. It was evident that the characteristics of the community were an asset going into the election.

Looking back on the campaign, respondents were asked to describe the impact of the media on the outcome of the election. Like many third-ring suburbs, most of the local news came in the form of three weekly newspapers distributed in various parts of the district. The largest two of these were read extensively by over 70% of the district's residents. More limited media coverage came from the metropolitan paper covering that part of the seven-county area (Morris, 1992).

Charlesville had the good fortune of having abundant informational coverage as well as editorial support. This was not necessarily the norm if one analyzed the historical tone of coverage about district issues. "It's been kind of the history here for [the newspaper] to beat up on the school district pretty regularly," said the superintendent. "For some reason I established a pretty good relationship with her [the editor] on the bond election." The weekly newspaper with the largest distribution had a reporter involved from the beginning, including coverage of the facility study that preceded the election campaign. "It was definitely a plus," said the superintendent. The campaign committee also launched its own media campaign that included letters to the editor, mailed flyers, and an informational video.

The presence of organized opposition in bond election campaigns is recognized as a powerful variable influencing the outcome of the election. The formation of organized opposition often goes hand-in-hand with split boards. Respondents in the Charlesville study were asked whether or not organized opposition was present in the 1993 election. "No, not that I was aware of," answered the president of the teachers' association. All the other individuals who were involved in the campaign agreed with him that there was no organized opposition in the election. The closest thing to opposition was a woman who saw some "vote no" flyers in the garage of a neighbor man. "Someone on the election committee knew this person," said the superintendent, "and apparently went over to talk to him. Nothing ever came of it." A board member speculated that organized opposition had never been part of the district's history and "...may be in violation of our community norms."

In summary, the election context was close to ideal in many respects. Significant growth in the area was accompanied by an expanding number of young families with children. The education and economic profile of the community were high and supported passage of the bond election. The history of the district was also favorable with all the special elections having passed in the last five years and a total absence of organized opposition. Only two factors detracted somewhat from an otherwise positive context. First, there was concern about the amount of the bonding request and the resulting increase in property taxes. Forty-six and one-half million was a large proposal, and the district was $50 higher than what was identified as ideal in projected tax increases to the average valued home (Morris, 1992). Second, there was some stress in one of the four communities served by the Charlesville School District. The fastest growing of the four communities was split among three different public school districts, and there was some talk in that community that they would be better off forming their own school district. These two factors only detracted minimally from Charlesville's favorable climate.

Strategic Factors

For purposes of this study, a strategic factor was defined as one element of the set of various methods selected and designed to form a plan to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. In evaluating this case study, it was important to understand to what extent Charlesville used research-based strategies and which of these strategies were believed to be most important to the outcome of the election. Thirty-eight strategic factors were identified in the literature and presented to knowledgeable respondents in the form of a survey. Individuals close to the study were first asked to identify which of these strategies were used and the relative importance of each in the 1993 bond election.

Thirty-four out of thirty-eight (89%) of the election strategies were used in the Charlesville campaign. Strategies not used in the campaign included the following:

1. Conducted a formal or informal analysis to identify influentials within the community
2. Demonstrated responsiveness to the opposition, diffused their platform, gained their support by modifying the referendum, incorporated their ideas
3. Identified and provided transportation to potential voters who require transportation to the polls

4. Campaign organized by elementary attendance areas

Respondents also rated the relative importance of the thirty-eight strategies by completing a survey and listing what they believed to be the most important strategies affecting the outcome of this election. A five point Likert scale was used ranging from "essential" (5) to "not important" (1). Ratings from individuals were averaged using arithmetic means to rank each strategy from most important to the outcome of Charlesville's 1993 bond election to least important. The following ten strategies obtained an average score of at least 4.5 on a 5.0 scale:

1. Encouraged citizen participation in the school district by giving citizens the opportunity to become involved (5.0)
2. Communication efforts focused on establishing a legitimate need (5.0)
3. School district provided information and inservice to citizens working on bond election campaign (4.85)
4. Established a citizen committee to involve the public in organizing and implementing election activities (4.85)
5. Identified the probable "yes" voter (4.71)
6. Conducted a district-wide program of public relations about the school district throughout the year (4.71)
7. Superintendent actively involved in the bond election campaign (4.71)
8. Focused the electorate's attention on the benefits which accrue to students from proposed improvements (4.57)

9. Used "Get Out The Vote" reminder calls to all identified supporters (4.57)
10. Used a formal or informal survey/poll to gather data on the citizens' feelings towards the proposal prior to the election (4.57)

Individuals involved in the campaign also responded to two open-ended questions related to election strategies. The first question asked them to identify the five most important strategies contained within the survey instrument. Three of the thirty-eight election strategies were identified as most important by at least half of the individuals completing the survey:

1. Conducted a district-wide program of public relations about the school district throughout the year (4 out of 8)
2. Used a formal or informal survey/poll to gather data on the citizens' feelings towards the proposal prior to the election (5 out of 8)
3. Identified the probable "yes" voter (5 out of 8)

It is interesting to note that the top responses to the open-ended questions were all included in the ten that received the highest average score.

Individuals involved with the campaign were also asked to identify strategies that they thought were important in the outcome of the election but were not included in the list of thirty-eight in the survey. The following two strategies were identified by at least one person:

1. A survey of parents that was conducted to determine which of several short-term options they would prefer until new space was available
2. Honesty and trust-building in the years when there isn't a need

Overall, Charlesville approached the election in a very strategic fashion. Eighty-nine percent of the identified strategies were used in the planning and campaign. Particular strengths were the surveys before the election campaign, the foundation established by the facility committee, the quality of leadership demonstrated by the staff and citizen committee, efforts to build support within the community, and communications. Of particular importance was the decision to delay the election three months based upon the initial survey. Failure to do so may have changed a relative landslide into a much closer election.

Critical Incidents

A critical incident is an unplanned, unexpected event occurring within a relatively close period before the vote that affects the use of strategic factors, non-strategic factors, and the outcome of the election. Individuals involved in the campaign were asked to consider whether any such incidents occurred and, if so, what effect they had on the use or strategies and the outcome of the election.

Individuals closest to the campaign were unable to identify any critical and unexpected incidents late in this campaign. Several minor glitches were mentioned that came up in the last month, but none that were significant in affecting the outcome. The school district and the citizen committee continued the course during the last few weeks in calm and predictable waters.

Leadership Style and Role of Superintendent

The leadership style and role of the superintendent was one of the important research questions focused on in this study. In addition to open-ended questions investigating this variable, respondents were also asked to label the superintendent's predominant leadership style using a conceptual model developed by Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal (1992). This model was summarized in the literature review and described leadership behavior in four categories. Individuals closely involved with the bond election were asked to identify which of the four descriptions best described the leadership role of their superintendent in the 1993 bond election.

Six out of eleven respondents selected Human Resource as the predominant leadership characteristic of the superintendent. This dimension of leadership focuses on empowering people and training and development and emphasizes involving people and focusing on feelings and needs, participation, communication, and relationships.

The Structural label was selected by three individuals. The superintendent himself was the only one of the group to select Political as his predominant leadership style.

Individuals were also asked to name the leadership category least like the superintendent. Five of the eleven respondents identified Symbolic as the leadership characteristic least like the superintendent. Structural and Political were both nominated by three individuals.

A set of three questions explored the importance and role of the superintendent in the bond election. The first questions asked respondents to describe how important it was during the bond election for the superintendent to have a positive relationship with the school board, staff, and community. A follow-up inquiry asked individuals to describe and evaluate those relationships in Charlesville at the time of the election. Another interview question investigated how important the superintendent's role was in relationship to the outcome of the election.

Everyone involved with the Charlesville bond election was unanimous in evaluating the importance of the superintendent's relationship with key constituencies. This characterization extended to the school board, staff, and community. The mayor of Charlesville used an analogy to billiards in framing this issue. "If you don't [have positive relationships]," he said, "you put yourself behind the eight ball so badly that people are going to see nothing else but the conflict and discontent. Conflict takes away from the prime objective of selling the bond referendum." One of the parent volunteers commented, "I think it's really important. If they're not working together as a team, you can undercut each other and that can really hurt school districts when they're trying to get a bond election passed." Several respondents noted that the strength of these relationships played to the strong suit of the superintendent. "This is one of those places where our superintendent really shines," said a central office administrator.

The relationship between the superintendent and staff was consistently rated as healthy. One person noted that the superintendent was still relatively new (three years) and had done a good job developing relationships with staff. The president of the teachers' union thought that the superintendent's ability to trust staff and delegate authority was partly responsible for his early success. The staff member was also impressed with the superintendent's interpersonal skills. "As far as I can tell," he said, "the superintendent knows everyone in the district by name. I don't know how he does it." None of the individuals interviewed noted any significant problems or issues related to the superintendent's relationship with the staff in Charlesville.

The superintendent's relationship with the school board was also rated high by knowledgeables involved with the school district's bond election. The chairperson of the school board remarked, "Excellent, very strong" when she characterized this working relationship. A central office administrator rated the superintendent's relationship with the school board as "...stronger at the time of the election than ever before." Another administrator commented, "The school board had a lot of confidence in the superintendent, and I think he made all the right moves." Similar perspectives were offered by other individuals and were best summed up by a school board representative: "They're all tops right now."

Comments about the superintendent's stature in the community paralleled many of the preceding remarks. It was evident that both professional and personal relationships were healthy and contributed to a solid foundation leading up to and during the bond election. Several respondents noted that the superintendent was visible and effective in professional responsibilities, but also was deeply involved in the community in many other ways. In characterizing the superintendent's relationship with the community, a staff member answered this way: "The superintendent's strength is that he gets involved with people and he's wonderful about remembering names and personal things about them and then being able to ask about that later. He's very good at building relationships."

School board members, staff, volunteers, and community members also described to what extent they believed the superintendent's role affected the outcome of the election. The consensus of opinion was that the superintendent's role in Charlesville was important and contributed to a successful campaign. Several of the comments described a good balance of active involvement and support behind the scenes. The three central office administrators assigned to coordinate the election campaign with the volunteer committee had broad autonomy to make decisions during the campaign. At the same time, the superintendent was visible in the community and was the front person for many presentations. One school board member described him as a "focused leader" while another asserted that his leadership was "essential." One of the three administrative staff described him as a cheerleader and commented that the superintendent "...had a good sense that he couldn't lead from that back on this one."

This characterization of the superintendent's impact was balanced by the perspective that the quality of the leadership team for both the school district and community was the foundation of the campaign. In the words of one board member, "The superintendent didn't have to carry the whole burden of the election." The superintendent himself concluded that he played an important role, but at the same time said that "...the election was not riding on my shoulders alone." Overall, people in Charlesville thought that the superintendent's efforts were important to the outcome of the election, both for his daily involvement and in his ability to organize and support a winning team. One of the administrative staff concluded that the one of the superintendent's most important contributions was to get the school board to understand the implication of the community survey before the date for the election was even set.

Summary of the Charlesville Case

The Charlesville bond election had many assets that combined to support an overwhelming victory on election day. The school board, administrative staff, and community volunteers orchestrated a model campaign that developed a variety of strategic initiatives from a strong contextual foundation. Over a period of several months the district managed to turn a significant public opinion deficit into a three to one victory at the polls. This was accomplished in part by building upon an unusually strong and ongoing public relations effort. Charlesville was the only district among the four case studies that employed a full-time person in this capacity. This investment was evident in the district's emphasis on communications and in the quality of the final products.

The demographics and election history within the district combined to create an excellent context for the campaign. Charlesville was well into a pattern of steady growth with a housing market appealing to young families. Many of the new residents were middle to upper-middle class in income with a substantial number with post-secondary degrees. A healthy percentage of families with school age children and a relatively low number of senior citizens resulted in a favorable electorate. The election history in Charlesville was also an asset. Three special elections seeking additional funding had been held in the five years prior to the 1993 bond election and all were approved by the community. Charlesville had a history of supporting public education when a legitimate need was justified.

The school district conducted two pre-election surveys. The first of the two was critically important to the outcome of the election because it resulted in nearly a three month delay. The first survey pointed out that the community at large was not aware of the scope or seriousness of crowding within the district. Individuals most directly responsible for public relations and communications expressed surprise at the results and some board members and staff tended to discredit that data altogether. The superintendent exercised both wisdom and leadership at this important juncture and was largely responsible for persuading the school board to delay the election until late March. The additional time was used to "crank up" the communications to a higher level. Parents were also surveyed to determine their preferred solution to short and long-range space problems. This had the effect of significantly raising the awareness of the problem and interest within the community.

The strength of relationships within the school district was a significant asset in the Charlesville election. The school board was solid in their support and played an important role primarily behind the scenes. Many individuals involved with the campaign commented that there was no doubt that the school board was unified. The superintendent's relationship with the school board and staff was also solid. The superintendent assigned three central office administrators the responsibility of coordinating the election on a daily basis and he spent most of his time "cultivating support" and interacting with various organizations and businesses within the community. This included the development of strong relationships with the mayors and county administrators.

Community leaders were selected to represent all four of the key geographical areas within the school district. Many of these volunteers were drawn from a forty member facility task force that had been formed to identify facility needs and make recommendations to the school board. This initiative created a core group of knowledgeable and committed residents and gave the school board the courage to approve a package of expansion and renovation goals that actually exceeded the level of spending suggested by the community survey. This bonding proposal included a new elementary school in a section of the school district that had the most questionable support early in the campaign.

From a strategic point of view, the district and community combined to plan and implement an outstandingly successful campaign. Survey and interview results determined that the campaign used a high percentage of strategies identified in the literature that correlated with successful bond elections. The public relations plan was implemented in an exemplary fashion and built upon a strong foundation of ongoing communications. An improved relationship with the print media resulted in neutral to mildly positive coverage from the weekly newspaper with the greatest distribution. As the weeks went by, momentum for passage of the election grew without the disadvantage of either organized opposition or critical events affecting the campaign. In the words of a Charlesville administrator, "I think we did about everything we planned on doing and accomplished our goals."

CHAPTER VIII

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CASE STUDY SITES

Introduction

The comparative analysis in Chapter VIII summarizes the aggregate data found in the four case studies and compares and contrasts the similarities and differences in the four bond elections conducted in 1993. One of the resources used to compare the case studies was the information collected by the professional polling firm used in all four school districts. Although each of the four school districts used the consultant in different ways, all the districts at least conducted pre-election opinion sampling before their election. This provided an opportunity to interpret non-strategic and strategic factors within the context of the survey results.

Triangulation can be defined as "...the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon; the focus always remains with the same phenomenon, but the mode of data collection varies. Triangulation tests both external and internal validity utilizing multiple methods to reveal different aspects of the phenomenon being studied" (Jick, p. 4). In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used to analyze the survey data and actual fieldwork. The survey data supplemented and helped triangulate the interviews, document review, observation and unobtrusive measures. In comparing and contrasting the four case studies, I have analyzed the data within the same framework of each of the case studies; non-strategic factors, strategic factors, and critical events affecting the outcome of the bond election. The comparison also focused on the leadership role of the superintendent.

Non-Strategic Factors

Non-strategic facts are contextual variables that affect the outcome of the election. All four of the bond elections were conducted in settings that provided the school districts with an opportunity to be successful. The overall quality of the environment did vary, however, from fair to excellent. All four of the districts were in the middle of moderate to strong growth cycles with the greatest expansion at the secondary level. The enrollment increases helped to demonstrate a legitimate need for the unique bonding proposals in each district. All the districts had school enrollments that were somewhat smaller than average by suburban standards. Both educational attainment and income were relatively high compared to the norm in the metropolitan area. Other characteristics defined contextual variables that were more or less positive when compared to the other case studies.

Only in Swanville were the city and school district boundaries contiguous, thus avoiding the challenge of developing relationships with and meeting the needs of more than one community. Even with this profile, however, district officials had to deal with significant diversity within the boundaries of the school district as the community evolved from rural, small town characteristics to a more affluent suburban environment. The other three school districts were composed of multiple communities including seven in Albertville and Windville and four in Charlesville. Windville and Charlesville were both heterogeneous in nature with substantial areas of both modest and affluent housing. Charlesville was both the fastest growing and most homogeneous community with nearly all the new development in moderate to up-scale suburban housing.

One of the important contextual variables is the age and make-up of residents within the school district. Of the four school districts, only Windville at 20% had less than one-third of its households containing school-age children. The other three districts ranged from 33% in Albertville to 38% in Swanville. The school district with the lowest percentage of households with school-age children (Windville) also had the highest number of senior citizens which created a less than desirable demographic profile.

The governance of the four school districts, as defined by the characteristics of the school board and superintendent, also helped to define the relative quality of the election environments. Swanville and Charlesville were quite similar in this regard with generally solid school boards, average board experience of four to six years, and moderately experienced superintendents who were generally viewed positively. Respondents in both districts gave the school board generally high marks. Albertville had the most experienced superintendent, but went into the election with a fairly inexperienced and badly split school board. Respondents rated the board very low. The governance issue in Windville was not an asset to the bond election effort with the most inexperienced school board and an interim superintendent. There was also some evidence of less than enthusiastic support from some of the school board members. Individuals knowledgeable about the district rated the school board low.

Three of the four school districts had an excellent history of passing finance elections in the five years before the 1993 bond elections. Albertville had passed one such election, Swanville two, and Charlesville three. Only Windville had a history of difficulty passing bond and referendum levies with two unsuccessful elections during the five year period before the 1993 bond election. Both Albertville and Windville went into their bond election campaigns with poor district financials and budget problems. Swanville and Charlesville were substantially stronger in this regard.

Table 8.1 summarizes some of these key contextual variables for analysis.

TABLE 8.1

CONTEXTUAL VARIABLES

	Win or Lose	Election History	% Senior Citizens	% School Age	Avg. Board Service	Financial Health
Albertville	Win	+	10%	33%	3	-
Swanville	Lose	+	6%	38%	6	+
Windville	Lose	-	15%	20%	2.5	-
Charles.	Win	+	4%	34%	4	+

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In terms of these contextual variables, it was apparent that Charlesville had the most favorable non-strategic profile and was in the best position to build the campaign strategy on a solid foundation. Swanville's context was actually quite similar to Charlesville in terms of these five variables even though they lost their election. In winning its bond election, Albertville overcame a no better than a fair non-strategic setting. Windville went into the 1993 bond election with a history of losing elections, an interim superintendent and shaky school board, the highest percentage of senior citizens, the lowest percentage of households with school-age children, and poor district financials. The election context did not bode well for the outcome of their bond election.

Strategic Factors

Strategic factors were defined as elements of the set of various methods selected and designed to form a plan to affect the outcome of the bond referendum. All four school districts used at least two-thirds of the strategies most commonly identified in the professional literature as associated with successful elections. A survey and depth interviews with knowledgeables differentiated among the four case studies in terms of the number and percentage of strategies used in the 1993 bond elections. The two successful elections used a higher percentage of strategic factors than the two that were rejected by their communities. The bond election passing by the largest margin used the highest percentage of the strategies. They are reported here from high to low in percentage of use.

TABLE 8.2

PERCENTAGE OF USE OF STRATEGIC FACTORS

	Win or Lose	Number of Factors Used in Bond Election	% of Factors Used in Bond Election
Charlesville	Win	34/38	89%
Albertville	Win	31/38	82%
Windville	Lose	30/38	80%
Swanville	Lose	26/38	68%

Knowledgeable respondents also ranked each of the thirty-eight strategies on a five point Likert scale in terms of importance to the outcome of the bond election in their community. Strategies judged to be most important were given a score of 5.0. Those strategies achieving a mean score of at least 4.5 on a 5.0 scale were summarized in each of the case studies. The winning districts ranked second and third in terms of the number of factors identified as most important. The district losing by the largest margin identified the fewest number of strategic factors as critically important. Table 8.3 summarized the number and percentage of factors rated 4.5 or higher in each school district.

TABLE 8.3

PERCENTAGE OF STRATEGIC FACTORS IDENTIFIED AS MOST IMPORTANT

	Win or Lose	Number of Factors Identified Most Important	% of Factors Identified Most Important
Windville	Lose	14/38	37%
Charlesville	Win	10/38	26%
Albertville	Win	9/38	24%
Swanville	Lose	5/38	13%

Table 8.4 contains an unduplicated set of strategic factors identified as most important (mean score of 4.5 or higher) by knowledgeables in each of the four districts. The "Yes" and "No" designation under each of the four cases indicates whether or not each of the listed strategic factors was identified as most important in that district.

TABLE 8.4

STRATEGIC FACTORS IDENTIFIED AS MOST IMPORTANT (MEAN OF 4.5 OR HIGHER)

Factor	Albert. (Win)	Charles. (Win)	Swan. (Lose)	Wind. (Lose)
1. Established a citizen committee to involve the public in organizing and implementing election activities	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2. Used "Get Out The Vote" reminder calls to identify supporters	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. Identified the probable "yes" voter	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
4. Focused the electorate's attention on the benefits that accrue to students from the proposed improvements	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
5. Used more than one media to convey the referendum message	Yes	No	No	Yes
6. Encouraged citizen participation in the school district by giving citizens the opportunity to become involved	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

7. Conducted a district-wide program of public relations about the school district throughout the year	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
8. Involved the certified staff of the school district in the campaign	Yes	No	No	No
9. Obtained a bond election endorsement from the local teacher union affiliate	Yes	No	No	No
10. Obtained an unanimous vote from all members of the school board to sponsor a bond election	No	No	Yes	Yes
11. School district provided information and inservice to citizens working on bond election campaign	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
12. Made campaign committee assignments to canvass citizens within the school district	No	No	Yes	No
13. Communication efforts focused on establishing a legitimate need	No	No	No	Yes
14. Focused on program need/maintenance	No	No	No	Yes
15. Superintendent actively involved in the campaign	No	Yes	No	Yes
16. Used more than one media to convey the referendum message	No	No	No	No

17. Focused the electorate's attention on the benefits that accrue to students from proposed improvements	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
18. Campaign literature developed and distributed by committee	No	No	No	Yes
19. Secured support from local newspapers via positive editorials	No	No	No	Yes
20. Used a formal or informal survey/poll to gather data on the citizens' feelings towards the proposal prior to the election	Yes	Yes	No	No

Of the total of twenty strategies identified by the four school districts as most important, it is informative to note the comparability between each of the two pairs of winning and losing elections. In examining the two winning elections in Albertville and Charlesville, there was 70% agreement on which of the factors were identified as most important. The two losing elections, however, had 40% of the factors commonly identified. This suggests that districts with a history of winning elections may be more successful in identifying and implementing those strategies most frequently correlated with success.

Knowledgeable respondents in each of the districts also identified the five factors believed to be most important in an open-ended response. The case studies identified the factors nominated by at least half of the respondents in each district. None of the strategic factors was identified as most important by all four of the cases in the open-ended response. The following two factors were nominated by both of the districts winning elections and one of the two losing elections. No other factor was nominated by more than one school district.

1. Identified probable "yes" voter
2. Used a formal or informal survey/poll to gather data on the citizens' feelings towards the proposal prior to the election

Critical Incidents

Knowledgeable respondents in each of the four districts were asked whether or not any critical incidents occurred that affected the use of strategic factors or the outcome of the election. The Charlesville bond election, having passed by the widest margin, was the only one the four case studies not to have had one or more critical incidents. Albertville was the other winning bond election and had two critical incidents identified by individuals closest to the case. Albertville's critical incidents were unexpected and came in the last days of the campaign. One involved distribution of "vote no" literature in church parking lots the Sunday before the Tuesday election. The second took the form of a negative letter to the editor by a school board member in the last issue of the local newspaper published before the election. These late strikes made it difficult for the school district to respond and brought the election razor close.

Respondents in both losing elections identified critical incidents that were thought to be important and, in at least one of the cases, changed the strategic direction of the campaign. In Swanville the most important critical incident related to the administration and interpretation of polling and survey work done before the campaign. Completion of the field work in Swanville, preparation of the consultant's report, and use of the data were about one month late. The report and recommendations arrived in the school district only three and one-half weeks before election day. Swanville was running both referendum and bond proposals on the same ballot, and the survey results suggested that continued authority for the operating referendum was in trouble. The school district and volunteers made a strategic shift at that point and emphasized the importance of the referendum question down the stretch. Although the referendum question was approved, the lateness of the survey results and the shift of emphasis to the referendum question probably cost the district at least one of the bond proposals.

Bad timing and a strategy that backfired were nominated as critical incidents by knowledgeables in Windville. Concerned about a possible rejection of the bonding proposal, the school board in Windville had beefed up its proposed health and safety levy to provide funds for a variety of projects in district schools in the event that the bond election failed. The plan was to reduce this levy dollar for dollar if the bond election passed and funding was available for these projects. Unfortunately for Windville, this strategy was unsuccessful and 250 unhappy residents jammed the district's board room for the "Truth in Taxation" hearing. Changes made by the 1993 legislature and the increase in the board's proposed health and safety levy combined to produce double-digit increases in proposed property taxes. Tax notices and significant media coverage within the school district and metropolitan area impacted the campaign negatively about eleven days before the election day. These critical incidents were probably the straw that broke the campaign's back in Windville.

Leadership Style and Role of Superintendent

The leadership style and role of the superintendent was one of the important research questions focused on in this study. Open-ended questions and identification of the superintendent's leadership style developed a profile of how the superintendent contributed to and affected the outcome of the bond election. Table 8.5 summarizes the strength of the superintendent's relationships with the school board, staff, and community as perceived by knowledgeables in each of the districts.

TABLE 8.5

SUPERINTENDENT RELATIONSHIPS

	Win/Lose	School Board	District Staff	Community
Albertville	Win	-/+	+	-/+
Swanville	Lose	+	+	+
Windville	Lose	-	+	-/+
Charlesville	Win	+	+	+

Respondents generally perceived the contribution of the superintendent as important in all four school districts, although there was a greater recognition of the superintendent's role in the districts that reported the most positive relationships between the superintendent, school board, and other constituencies. In Windville, where relationships with the school board and community were most strained, the superintendent's role was kept largely in the background and out of the community spotlight. Campaign planning and communications were predominantly done in the superintendent's office with other staff and volunteers implementing the plan. Albertville, where relationships were also strained to a lesser extent, also played the superintendent's public role close to the vest and kept the committee co-chairs more in the public eye. Both Swanville and Charlesville perceived the superintendent's role as an asset both within the structure of the campaign committee and in the community.

Individuals knowledgeable about the campaign were also asked to characterize the leadership style of the superintendent using a conceptual model developed by Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal (1991). This forced-choice selection identified the superintendent's predominant leadership style as either Human Resource, Symbolic, Structural, or Political. Respondents also identified the characteristic least like the superintendent. Table 8.6 below summarizes these data.

TABLE 8.6

SUPERINTENDENT LEADERSHIP STYLE

	Win/Lose	Most Like Superintendent	Least Like Superintendent
Albertville	Win	Human Resource	Structural/Political
Swanville	Lose	Human Resource	Political/Symbolic
Windville	Lose	Structural	Political/Symbolic
Charlesville	Win	Human Resource	Symbolic

Both winning elections selected Human Resource as the superintendent's predominant leadership style. This characteristic was also selected by one of the two losing elections. The selections identified as least like the superintendent were more mixed with both Symbolic and Political being selected in three out of four cases. One unexpected finding related to the Political dimension. Nearly all respondents across the four case studies, known to be negative about the bonding proposal in their districts, identified Political as the predominant leadership characteristic of the superintendent. This was true even in cases in which no one else in the district nominated this characteristic as predominant. Based upon the comments from respondents, one would conclude that individuals most estranged from the school district interpreted the information from school officials with skepticism and characterized much of the superintendent's actions as political in the most negative sense of the word.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I will present a summary of findings drawn from the case studies and expressed within the context of the conceptual framework and review of the literature.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Minnesota schools will require a major investment during the remainder of this decade to expand and improve instructional spaces and to provide needed technology. As much as 100 million annually will need to be invested in technology from 1995 to the year 2000. This figure does not include staffing or training costs. Three out of four computers currently in classrooms are out of date and the student to computer ratio is two times the recommended level (Minnesota State Planning Agency, 1994). Many schools also have inadequate laboratories and spaces for large group instruction (United States Government Accounting Office, 1995).

Enrollment increases and aging buildings resulted in a significant number of bond elections and major school construction activity in Minnesota in the last ten years, a trend expected to continue through the end of the decade. Metropolitan bond referenda generally resulted from growth while rural areas addressed replacement or improvement of facilities. Although many of these elections have provided districts with the resources to address facility needs, many others were unsuccessful--about a forty percent average failure rate in 1991, 1992, and 1993 elections.

Providing adequate school facilities to meet these growing needs in the metropolitan area will be a major leadership challenge in the next decade. "...If educators provide effective political influence, most citizens will support quality schools. Such support will not arise, [however], in a spontaneous ground swell; educators will have to provide vigorous political leadership to earn it" (Kimbrough & Nunnery, 1971, p.5). This leadership cannot be fulfilled without an understanding of election strategies, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents that affect the outcome of school bond referenda. It is also important to understand the leadership role of the superintendent within this context. This was the topic of my study.

The Statement of the Problem

This comparative case study investigated strategies, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents thought to affect the outcome of school bond referenda. Particular attention was paid to the leadership role of the superintendent in each of the cases. Four public school districts in the metropolitan area of St. Paul and Minneapolis were randomly selected from the pool of districts that conducted bond referenda in 1992 or 1993. Two of the districts were selected from the set of successful bond elections and two from the set of unsuccessful elections. Other criteria considered in establishing the pool of eligible districts included the date of the election (with a preference to more recent referenda), geographical proximity, and the general comparability of districts.

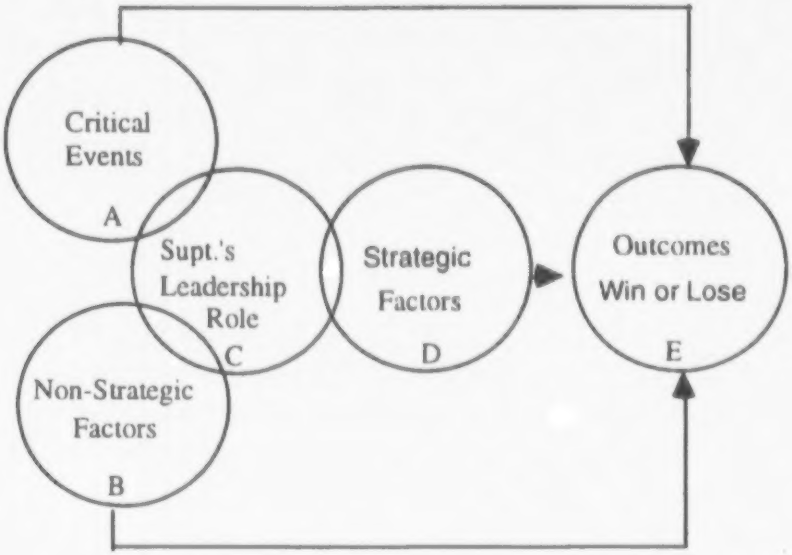
Knowledgeable respondents in each of the four school districts completed a survey questionnaire and were interviewed.

A comparative study of the school districts participating in this research study described, analyzed, and interpreted answers to the following general question: What effect does the use or non-use of different election strategies have on the outcome of school bond referenda? Questions that relate to the basic question are the following:

1. What election strategies are most commonly used to affect the outcome of school bond referenda and why?
2. Which election strategies are perceived as having the greatest effect on the outcome of school bond referenda and why?
3. Which election strategies most differentiate between successful and unsuccessful school bond referenda and why?
4. How do election strategies compare with other non-strategic factors in deciding school bond referenda?
5. Were critical incidents present; and if so, what affect did they have on strategic and non-strategic factors and the election outcome?
6. How did the leadership role of the superintendent affect the selection of election strategies and the management of non-strategic factors and critical incidents?

Conceptual Framework

This study was based on a conceptual framework that non-strategic factors, strategic factors, and critical incidents affect the outcome of school bond referenda. The model further suggested that non-strategic factors and critical incidents affected both the selection and use of specific strategies and the outcome of school bond referenda. Particular attention was paid to the leadership role of the superintendent within this context. This conceptual framework is depicted in the figure that follows.


Critical Events
A
Supt.'s Leadership Role
C
Strategic Factors
D
Outcomes Win or Lose
E
Non-Strategic Factors
B

Cell A contains critical events that, when present, are thought to affect the superintendent's leadership role in Cell C, the selection of strategic factors in Cell D, and the outcome of the election in Cell E. Cell B contains a summary and organization of non-strategic factors thought to affect the superintendent's leadership role in Cell C, the selection and use of strategic factors in Cell D, and the outcome of the election in Cell E. Cell D contains the set of strategic factors selected and used during the campaign which are thought to affect the outcome of the election. Cell E is the set of all winning and losing bond elections. The model further suggests that critical events and non-strategic factors have the potential to directly affect the outcome of the election separate from the influence of the superintendent's leadership role and the selection and use of strategic factors. The organization and content used in Cells A, B, C, and D are adapted from the work of Philip Piele and John Hall (1973), Lorraine Boyle (1984), and William Wood (1990).

The leadership role of the superintendent within the conceptual framework was studied within four structural categories outlined by Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal (1991). These structural categories are based on the belief that the capacity to reframe critical issues and use more than one frame to make judgments about appropriate actions are critical to the leader's effectiveness. Bolman and Deal (1991) identify the human resource dimension, the structural dimension, the political dimension, and the symbolic dimension.

Review of the Literature

The review of the literature provided an overview of research which summarized factors thought to affect the outcome of bond referenda. The first section summarized the non-strategic, environmental factors. Contextual variables that are environmental, socioeconomic, or psychological in nature predispose voters within a community to vote in certain ways. These contextual variables are largely outside the control of the school practitioner. The second section reviewed strategic factors related to campaign strategies. The chapter concluded with a discussion of how critical incidents, when present, interact with other factors to influence decision-making and the outcome of bond elections.

Philip Piele and John Hall's Budgets, Bonds and Ballots, published in 1973 provided a foundation for analyzing these elections. The authors summarized research conducted in the 1960's through the early 1970's. A total of sixty-one variables were analyzed and categorized within six identified factors affecting the outcome of bond elections. Research studies for each of the variables were labeled as being significantly positive, negative, or not statistically related to the results of these elections. Lorraine Boyle, in a 1984 doctoral dissertation at the University of Minnesota, expanded on the foundation provided by Piele and Hall by extending the study of bond elections between 1973 and 1983 within the same general framework. The literature review extended these analyses by examining both quantitative and qualitative studies of bond elections through 1994.

Research findings revealed by Philip Piele and John Hall, Lorraine Boyle, and dozens of more recent studies clearly demonstrate that non-strategic factors, strategic factors, and critical incidents affect the outcome of school bond referenda. The leadership role of the superintendent was also identified as an important variable in many studies. Many quantitative studies sought to isolate one or more of these variables for study. Qualitative designs also investigated these factors through in-depth case analyses. Although practitioners need to approach campaign planning from this research point of view, the challenge expands beyond simply identifying promising practices in the literature. Part of the art of leadership is to understand bond election research and then tailor specific strategies to the non-strategic setting. The campaign plan then becomes a carefully woven fabric of strategies designed to interact with and influence the environment within the school district. This conclusion became the basis for the design and analyses of this case study.

Conclusions and Discussion

Conclusion 1. School districts are more likely to win bond elections if the campaign plan is strategic in nature and includes a high percentage of strategies associated with successful elections.

Knowledgeable respondents in the four school districts were asked to review a list of thirty-eight election strategies identified in the professional literature and associated with successful bond elections. The case studies were compared in relationship to the percentage of these strategic factors used in each school district. The two successful school districts used an average of 85.5% of the thirty-eight identified strategies. The two losing districts used an average of 74% of the strategies

Conclusion 2. There is greater congruence among successful bond elections than unsuccessful in what knowledgeable respondents identify as the most important campaign strategies.

Knowledgeable respondents in the four school districts rated the thirty-eight election strategies on a Likert scale ranging from not important to critically important. Strategies with a mean score of 4.5 or higher on a 5.0 scale were identified as most important in that school district's bond election campaign. The lists of strategies in each district were compared and contrasted. Seventy percent of the strategies identified as most important by the two winning districts were in common. Only 40% were similar between the two losing districts. There was also more agreement between the two winning campaigns on how many of the thirty-eight strategies were ranked most important (24% of the strategies in one district and 26% in the other). There was less agreement in the two losing districts with a range of 13% to 37% of the strategies identified as most important.

Conclusion 3. Identification of probable "yes" voters and use of a formal or informal survey or poll to gather data on the citizens' feelings towards the proposal before the election are key variables to the outcome bond elections.

Knowledgeable respondents in the four school districts were asked an open-ended question related to the thirty-eight strategies identified in the survey instrument. Each respondent identified the five strategies believed to be most important to the outcome of the bond election in their district. A list was compiled for each of the four cases that included those strategies identified in the open-ended response by at least half of the respondents in each district. These lists were compared and contrasted for analyses. Identification of probable "yes" voters and use of a pre-election survey or poll were nominated by over half of the respondents in three out of four school districts.

Conclusion 4. School districts with a more favorable non-strategic context are more likely to be successful in winning a bond election.

Non-strategic factors in the four school districts were compared and contrasted. Particular emphasis was paid to the following non-strategic factors: election success in the previous five years before the 1993 bond election, percentage of senior citizens in the district, percentage of school-age children in the district, average length of school board service, and the financial health of the district at the time of the election. The district with the most positive composite of non-strategic characteristics won by the largest margin. The district with the poorest non-strategic profile lost by the largest margin.

Conclusion 5. Critical incidents do affect the outcome of a bond election, the non-strategic environment, and the use of election strategies.

Critical incidents occurred in both losing school districts and in one out of two winning school districts. Knowledgeable respondents believed that these incidents affected the outcome of the election, and in at least two cases, resulted in significant modifications in the strategic approach to the election.

Conclusion 6. A measure of overall satisfaction with the school district is not predictive, as a discrete variable, to the outcome of a bond election.

Each of the four school districts conducted pre-election surveys that included a question measuring overall satisfaction with the school district. Survey respondents rated the school district as excellent, good, fair, or poor. The two winning school districts had a mean excellent/good percentage of 64.5%. The two losing districts had a mean approval rating of 70%.

Conclusion 7. The quality of the relationships between the superintendent and the school board, staff, and community affected both the extent and nature of involvement of the superintendent and the perceived contribution of the superintendent to the outcome of the election.

The two superintendents rated the highest in terms of their relationships with the school board, staff, and community played more active and visible roles in the election, were more public in their efforts, and were given more credit in affecting the outcome of the election. In districts where one or more of these relationships were more strained, the superintendent worked more behind the scenes, did less public presentations, and was not believed to be as significant a factor in the outcome of the election.

Conclusion 8. Community conflict is a barrier to bond election success.

The school district that had the least conflict within the community and school district won by the largest margin. The school district with the greatest conflict in the community and within the school district lost by the largest margin. The districts experiencing the greatest conflict also experienced the most aggressive levels of opposition activity during the bond election campaign.

Conclusion 9. Human Resource Development is a predominant leadership style of a superintendent during a bond election campaign.

Three out of four superintendents were characterized as using predominantly Human Resource Development leadership style during the election campaign. There was significant agreement among respondents in selecting this style.

Conclusion 10. The characterization of the superintendent's leadership style is significantly influenced by how one perceives the school district and the merits of bonding proposal.

Every respondent who exhibited negative feelings about the school district and strong opposition to the bonding proposal characterized the superintendent's predominant leadership style as political. This was the case despite the fact that not a single other respondent selected this style as predominant. Follow-up comments from these individuals made it clear that they associated negative rather than neutral attributes to the political dimension and that their feelings about the school district and bond election colored their perceptions of the superintendent. This finding was consistent with research cited by Piele and Hall related to how cynicism and alienation fuel conflict and opposition (Piele & Hall, 1973).

Conclusion 11. A public relations program characterized by ongoing communications throughout the year is advantageous to the outcome of school bond referenda.

The school district with the strongest program of ongoing communications also had the greatest deficit going into the campaign as measured by the pre-election survey. Through an effective and aggressive communications effort, they were able to turn public opinion around and eventually prevail by the largest margin. This district had established a public relations system long before the campaign began and was the only district to commit a full-time professional to this work.

Recommendations for Further Research

The recommendations for further research relate to both unanswered questions suggested by the data as well as the inherent strengths and limitations of qualitative study. These comparative case studies organized the data by specific cases and studied each in depth. Case data included all the interview data, observational data, documents, impressions and statements over time. After the data were collected, they were organized into case records for use in subsequent analyses. Qualitative studies "...[trade] the breadth of material gathered from many subjects for the depth and quality of material available in a single case study site" (Halverson, 1986, p. 38). Within that context, further study could help answer the following questions:

1. Would a quantitative study of bond elections substantiate the eleven conclusions reached in this study?
2. Is there is significant relationship between superintendents who exercise predominantly Human Resource Development leadership strategies and success in bond elections?
3. Which of the non-strategic variables studied are most predictive of election outcome?

As the need for expanding and improving schools grows within an increasingly difficult political and tax climate, it will be imperative that these and other questions be studied to provide the practitioner with a greater understanding of how to maximize success during a bond election campaign.

Implications for Practice

The findings and conclusions in the present study mirror many similar findings in both qualitative and quantitative studies cited in the literature review. Implications of the present research are as follows:

1. It is imperative that practitioners recognize the strategic nature of bond elections and turn to the professional research to guide the development of a campaign plan. This is particularly important because of the predictive nature of past election success. One simply cannot afford to develop a pattern of losses.
2. Careful attention needs to be paid to the non-strategic, contextual environment long before the school board proposes a bond election. Variables that can be influenced by the school board or superintendent need to be understood and exploited to the advantage of the school district. This includes a strong emphasis on an ongoing public relations program.

3. The skillful practitioner should recognize that each school district is unique and there is no "cookie cutter" solution which will guarantee a successful bond election. The art of informed practice is to understand the contextual and strategic variables that can be woven into a campaign plan that will give the district the best chance to be successful. Understanding how the superintendent can be most effective in each unique situation is important to support the campaign effort.

As stated before, providing adequate school facilities to meet the growing needs in the metropolitan area will be a major leadership challenge in the next decade. This need cannot be fulfilled without an understanding of election strategies, non-strategic factors, and critical incidents that affect the outcome of school bond referenda and the role of the superintendent. It is hoped that this case study provided additional insight into this important leadership challenge.

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APPENDIX 1: Request to Conduct Research

Dear:

I am writing to you to request your involvement in a University of Minnesota research study. Your school district has agreed to participate in a research project studying the factors affecting the outcome of school bond referenda. In completing this study, data will be collected from members of the board of education, district staff, and other citizens involved or knowledgeable about your school district's last bond election. Survey data and analysis of other election documents will also be incorporated in the project. Individuals interviewed will discuss the bond election from their point of view with an emphasis on the factors believed to have affected the outcome of the election.

Your agreement to participate will be of great benefit to the researcher and the body of knowledge being contributed to by this study. The total time commitment, including the survey instrument, will be no more than one and a half hours. I am going to try to conduct as many interviews as possible on May 25 and 26 at your school district offices. Alternative arrangements can be made for both time and location at your convenience.

The attached consent form provides additional information about the research questions and procedures including confidentiality. I will be in telephone contact with you within the next ten days to request a time and place for your interview. I look forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Don Lifto, Ph.D. Candidate
University of Minnesota

APPENDIX 2: Consent Form

FACTORS AFFECTING THE OUTCOME OF SUCCESSFUL AND UNSUCCESSFUL BOND REFERENDA IN FOUR SCHOOL DISTRICTS
CONSENT FORM

You are invited to be in a research study of school bond referenda. You were selected as a possible participant because of your involvement or knowledge of a bond election in your school district in 1992, 1993, or 1994. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by : Don Lifto, University of Minnesota

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to answer the following questions:

1. What election strategies are most commonly used to affect the outcome of school bond referenda and why?
2. Which election strategies are perceived as having the greatest affect on the outcome of school bond referenda and why?
3. Which election strategies most differentiate between successful and unsuccessful school bond referenda and why?
4. How do election strategies compare with other non-strategic factors in deciding school bond referenda?
5. Were critical incidents present; and if so, what affect did they have on strategic and non-strategic factors and the election outcome?
6. How did the leadership role of the superintendent affect the selection of election strategies and the management of non-strategic factors and critical incidents?

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

Complete a questionnaire and participate in an interview.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

There are no risks from participating in the study. The benefits include receiving an executive summary of the significant findings.

You will not receive payment for participating in the study.

Confidentiality.

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject, and names of respondents or the school district will not be disclosed. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researcher will have access to the records. Tape recordings of interviews will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Don Lifto. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact him at (612) 426-3224 or (612) 429-6885. Advisor Tim Mazzoni can be reached at (612) 624-0235.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature ____________________________Date ________________________

Signature of Investigator __________________________Date ___________

APPENDIX 3: First Draft of Interview for Fieldtesting

GENERAL INTERVIEW FORMAT

School District:

Date of Interview:

Position:

1. Review the interview procedures (taping, confidentiality, anonymity).

2. Briefly tell me how you were involved in the bond election campaign.

3. How was the campaign organized?

PROBE:
- Who ran the campaign?
- How were citizens involved?
- How were staff involved?

4. How would you describe the overall campaign theme or focus?
   - Any special emphasis on benefits to students?

5. How would you evaluate the general perception of the school board prior to the bond election campaign? Did the school board maintain a strong and unanimous base of support?

6. How would you characterize the general perception of the superintendent prior to the bond election campaign?

7. How would you describe the climate in the district in the year preceding the election?

8. How did the election context – the nature of your community itself – affect the outcome?

PROBE:
- Demographics?
- Socioeconomic status?

- Nature of power structure?

9. To what extent did the school district canvass, identify, and target probable yes voters?

10. Was there organized opposition?

    - Who? To what extent?
    - What were their primary objections?

11. How important was the cost of the proposal?

    - Tax implications?

12. Describe for me how the superintendent was involved in the campaign?

PROBE:

- Planning?
- Day-to-day operation?
- Public profile?
- Overall leadership role?

13. Were there any critical, unplanned incidents or events late in the campaign that profoundly affected the outcome?

14. Is there anything about this election that was significantly different than the experience of the school district in other bond elections in the past?

15. How would you evaluate the importance of the superintendent's role in the bond election campaign?

16. Did the school district conduct a public opinion survey prior to a decision to conduct a bond election?

    - If so, were there significant findings that affected the content or timing of the election?
    - If so, were there significant findings that affected the use of strategies in the election campaign?

17. Did the campaign strategy include identifying the community power structure (individuals or groups) and trying to influence or involve them in some way?

18. What forms of media were used in the campaign?

PROBE:

- Which do you think was most effective or damaging?

19. We talked before about the role of the superintendent. I am going to ask you to read a brief summary which is one way to characterize the different leadership roles of the superintendent.

–Which of the four characterizations best describes how your superintendent provided leadership during the bond election campaign?

PROBE:

- Tell me why?
- Give me some examples.

20. Which of the four characterizations is least like how your superintendent provided leadership during the bond election campaign?

PROBE:

- Tell me why?
- Give me some examples?

21. Looking back on the election, what do you think were the key factors in the outcome of the election?

PROBE:

- Non-Strategic Factors
- Preelection Strategies
- Policy Strategies
- Political Strategies
- Communication Strategies

22. If you were running the campaign today, is there anything that you would do differently?

23. Besides the superintendent and school board, who in the school district has a keen insight into factors that affected the outcome – pro or con?

24. Review questionnaire with interviewee.

APPENDIX 4: Final Interview Format

GENERAL INTERVIEW FORMAT

School District

Date of Interview:

Position:

1. Review the interview procedures (taping, confidentiality, anonymity).

2. To begin, briefly tell me how you were involved in the bond election campaign.

3. How was the campaign effort organized?

   PROBE:

   - Who was the key person in planning the campaign?
   - Who ran the campaign on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis?
   - How were citizens involved?
   - How were staff involved?
   - How was the school board involved?

4. Was there an overall campaign theme or focus?

5. On a scale of 5 to 1 (with 5 being the strongest) how would you evaluate the credibility and community support for the school board in the year leading up to the election?

   PROBE:

   - Was the school board united in its support for the bond election?

6. As far as the superintendent is concerned, how important is it in a bond election campaign to have a positive relationship between the superintendent and community, superintendent and school board, and superintendent and staff?

PROBE:

- How would you describe these relationships leading up to and during the election campaign?

- How supportive of the election was the staff?

7. On a scale of 5 to 1 (with 5 being the strongest) how do you think the community generally viewed the school district in the year preceding the election?

8. What can you tell me about the nature of your community itself that affected the outcome of the election?

PROBE:

- Demographics?
- Economy?
- Significant conflicts?
- Power Structure?

9. Did the campaign plan include identifying and targeting probable yes voters? How?

10. Was there organized opposition?

PROBE:

- Who? To what extent?
- What were their primary objections?

11. How important was the cost of the proposal?

- Tax implications?

12. Describe for me how the superintendent was involved in the campaign?

PROBE:

- Planning?
- Day-to-day operation?
- Public profile?

- Overall leadership role?

13. Win or lose, every bond election has its critics. What were the main objections you heard about in this campaign?

14. Were there any critical, unexpected, and unplanned incidents late in the campaign that you think affected the outcome?

PROBE:

- Did the incident(s) change any late campaign strategies in any way?

15. Have there been other bond or referendum elections in the school district in the last five years? If yes,

PROBE:

- What were the results?
- How was the 1993 bond election different or the same?

16. You described before how the superintendent was involved. How important was the superintendent's leadership role in the outcome of this election?

17. Did the school district conduct a public opinion survey prior to a decision to hold a bond election?

-Were there significant findings in the survey that influenced the content or timing of the election?

-Were there significant findings in the survey that affected what strategies were used?

18. Did the campaign strategy include identifying the community power structure (individuals or groups) and trying to influence or involve them in some way?

19. What forms of media were used in the campaign?

PROBE:

- What do you think was the most helpful?
- Was there something that was particularly damaging?

20. We talked before about the role of the superintendent. I am going to ask you to read a brief summary which describes four different leadership styles.

-Which of the four characterizations best describes the predominant leadership style of the superintendent during the bond election campaign?

PROBE:

- Tell me why you picked ______________?
- Give me some examples of what you mean.

21. Which of the four characterizations is least like how your superintendent provided leadership during the bond election campaign?

PROBE:

- Tell me why?
- Give me some examples?

22. You said before that ______________ was the primary architect of the bond election campaign. To what extent did the campaign committee stick to the script?

23. Looking back on the election, what do you think were the key factors in the outcome?
PROBE:
- If you could do it over again, what would you do differently?

24. If you were doing my research study, who would you want to talk to that would have keen insight into your election?

25. Review questionnaire with interviewee.

APPENDIX 5: Interview Assessment

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW ASSESSMENT

Informant: ______________________________ Site: _______________

Date: __________ Time started: ______ Time finished: _______

1. Informant seemed:

Uninterested	1	2	3	4	5	Interested
Reluctant	1	2	3	4	5	Straightforward
Uninformed	1	2	3	4	5	Knowledgeable

2. Informant distinguished between:

information remembered clearly and information not remembered clearly	___ Yes ___ No
events he/she was close to and events he/she was not close to	___ Yes ___ No

3. Interview seemed:

Hurried	1	2	3	4	5	Comfortable
Tense	1	2	3	4	5	Relaxed

4. Were there any interruptions that were detrimental to the interview?
_____ Yes ______ No If yes, specify:

5. Were there questions the informant did not understand or was unable to answer?
_______ Yes _______ No If yes, specify:

6. Were there questions the informant was unwilling to answer?
_______ Yes _______ No If yes, specify:

7. Comments/observations:

8. Follow-up questions for informant:

APPENDIX 6: Leadership Dimensions

LEADING AND MANAGING

Leadership Dimension	Characteristics
Structural	This dimension of leadership focuses on planning, organizing, setting goals, and implementing procedures. There is an emphasis on role clarification, systems, structures, and analysis.
Human resource	This dimension of leadership focuses on empowering people, training and development. There is an emphasis on involving people, feelings and needs, participation, communication, and relationships.
Political	This dimension of leadership focuses on building alliances, negotiating positions, advocacy, and influence or pressure. There is an emphasis on the power structure, managing conflict, and managing competing interests.
Symbolic	This dimension of leadership focuses on institutional identity, symbols, rituals, and ceremonies. There is an emphasis on vision, vitality, morale, and projecting a positive image.

Adapted from Lee G. Bolman and Terrance E. Deal (1992). Leading and Managing: Effects of Context, Culture, and Gender. Educational Administration Quarterly, 28, 314-329.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES USED IN SCHOOL BOND REFERENDA IN MINNESOTA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Responses are requested from knowledgeable individuals involved in the last bond election campaign in your school district. Your name/school district will not be identified. The materials have been coded only to allow follow-up on unreturned questionnaires. Return of the questionnaire is requested by ________________________.

*Questionnaire was adapted from Boyle (1984) and Mancini (1987).

BOND ELECTION CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

Practiced by District				Importance of Strategy				
YES	NO	UNKNOWN	**DIRECTIONS** Below is a list of 38 strategies sometimes used in bond election campaigns. For each item indicate on the left whether or not that campaign strategy was practiced by your school district in the last bond election campaign. In the right-hand column, indicate from your observation how important each of the strategies was or would have been in the bond election.	NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	AVERAGE IMPORTANCE	VERY IMPORTANT	ESSENTIAL
			Encouraged citizen participation in the school district by giving citizens the opportunity to become involved.					
			School district provided information and in-service to citizens working on bond election campaign.					
			Use more than one media to convey the referendum message (television, radio, newspapers, brochures, etc.).					
			Focused on program need/maintenance (legal requirement to offer a new educational program, a community desire to offer a new education program, or a need/desire to offer an existing program).					
			Focused the electorate's attention on the benefits which accrue to students from proposed improvements.					
			Identified the probable "yes" voter (married, parents of school-aged children, higher income brackets, highly educated, professionals, African Americans).					
			Established a citizen committee to involve the public in organizing and implementing election activities.					

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Practiced by District				Importance of Strategy				
YES	NO	UNKNOWN		NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	AVERAGE IMPORTANCE	VERY IMPORTANT	ESSENTIAL
			Bond election plan organized by the superintendent.					
			Used a formal or informal survey/poll to gather data on the citizens' feelings towards the proposal prior to the election.					
			Conducted a formal or informal analysis to identify influentials within the community.					
			Made a conscious decision to limit the campaign to a specific number of weeks.					
			Students in school district were actively involved in campaign.					
			Campaign literature developed and distributed by committee.					
			Communications strategies were tailored to different audiences.					
			Communication efforts focused on establishing a legitimate need.					
			Secured support from local newspapers via positive editorials and news coverage of the bond election proposal.					
			Conducted a district-wide program of public relations about the school district throughout the year.					

Practiced by District				Importance of Strategy				
YES	NO	UNKNOWN		NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	AVERAGE IMPORTANCE	VERY IMPORTANT	ESSENTIAL
			Made a conscious decision to set the date of the election for a specific week or month in order to gain an edge in the campaign.					
			Made campaign committee assignments to canvass citizens within the school district.					
			Made the general public aware (high profile) of the impending bond election by systematically "talking up" the issue.					
			Identified and contacted internal and external special interest groups to gain their support and endorsements.					
			Used "Get Out The Vote" reminder calls to all identified supporters.					
			Demonstrated responsiveness to the opposition, diffused their platform, gained their support by modifying the referendum, incorporated their ideas.					
			Involved the certified staff of the school district in the campaign.					
			Obtained a unanimous vote from all members of the school board to sponsor a bond election.					
			Selected an overall communication theme/ slogan to promote passage of the bond election.					

Practiced by District				Importance of Strategy				
YES	NO	UNKNOWN		NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	AVERAGE IMPORTANCE	VERY IMPORTANT	ESSENTIAL
			Analyzed past voting patterns in the school district and used this information in developing election strategies.					
			Assessed the mood of the employees towards the school district formally or informally.					
			Identified and provided transportation to potential voters who require transportation to the polls.					
			Secured city council(s) endorsement for the bond election.					
			Arrived at a decision to sponsor a bond election at least three months prior to the election.					
			Recruited the senior citizen vote or involved them in the bond election campaign.					
			Promoted support for the bond election by associating passage with greater opportunities within the community.					
			Obtained a bond election endorsement from the local teacher union affiliate.					
			Used a campaign consultant for campaign expertise.					

Practiced by District				Importance of Strategy				
YES	NO	UNKNOWN		NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	AVERAGE IMPORTANCE	VERY IMPORTANT	ESSENTIAL
			Attempted to neutralize "No" voters by pointing out negative affects of defeat thereby creating internal conflict.					
			Campaign organized activities by elementary attendance areas.					
			Superintendent actively involved in the bond election campaign.					

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Of the strategies included in this questionnaire, write the number of the five you believe were most important in your election.

Was there a strategy used in your election, not listed above, that you believe had a significant impact on the outcome of the election? If yes, please describe:

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